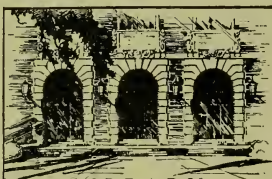




IN MONOUR.

BOUND





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IN HONOUR BOUND.

BY

CHARLES GIBBON,

AUTHOR OF "ROBIN GRAY," "FOR LACK OF GOLD," "FOR THE
KING," ETC.

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food ;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles."
WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON :
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON.

1874.

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IN HONOUR BOUND.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVERSION.

HE fishers gave one grand cheer for all the bonnie ladies of Dalma-hoy and Craighburn, which was acknowledged with smiles and gracious bows—Miss Burnett crying in high falsetto, “Oh, how funny!”—Alice clapping her hands in ecstasy, and begging to be allowed to follow the folk wherever they were going.

Then the crowd moved off in an irregular procession towards the inn. Habbie Gowk led the way, bestriding Beattie with a

jauntier air than ever the provost himself displayed when whirling along in his carriage and lamps. He was followed by a group of youths and maidens—the former in loose blue trousers, coloured shirts, and sparkling neckerchiefs; the latter in blue or red striped petticoats, little tartan shawls worn with a certain coquettish grace, and bare heads—hair plaited in cunning bands, or rolled up in the familiar knot at the back, and tied with a bit of bright ribbon. They were singing the “Boatie Rows” in capital marching time, arms linked in arms, bodies and steps swinging to the tune. The next group were busy “daffing” (jesting), and hauling each other about from one side of the road to the other in a wild way.

“Let me be,” cries strapping Peg Johnstone, as a stalwart young fisher gripes her round the waist and kisses her without the least regard to observation. She whirls herself good-humouredly out of his grasp into the arms of another swain.

“Do you no wish it was your wadding,

Jean?" says Gleyed (Squinting) Tam, leering at the bright girl beside him.

"'Deed do I, so bein's it was the lad I wanted," replied Jean frankly.

"Wouldna I do for you?"

"Whan you ha'e gotten rid o' your gleyed e'e, and whan you're skipper o' twa boats, speir then," says the quean, with that characteristic frankness which would be accounted rudeness elsewhere, but which here only provoked a hearty laugh at the expense of the lad.

He took it in good part, and, joining in the laugh—

"The boats I'll manage, but what has a gleyed e'e to do wi' 't?"

"I would never ken when you was looking at another lass, and when at me."

"Oh, but you would make my e'en grow straight, they would sit so steady on you."

"Will you sweer to that?"

"I'll try," was the somewhat cautious answer.

"When's your day to be, Tibbie?" says Tak'-it-easy Davie, reputed to be the laziest fellow in Rowanden.

He left his patch of garden entirely untended one season ; but it happened that in the previous year he had so carelessly “lifted” (dug up) his “taties” that he had left more than enough in the ground to form seed for the coming season. Consequently, without having put a spade in the ground, he had an excellent crop of potatoes. The neighbours were amazed ; but Tak'-it-easy Davie simply observed, “There's naething lost by laziness.” Another of his sayings was, “Procrastination is the mother of invention!”

To his question, Tibbie, a somewhat dowdy girl, with a rather severe expression, replied,

“My day ?—the-morn come never.”

“That's a long while.”

“Is't ?—but though, it's nae longer than when you'll bring hame a guid shot.”

“That's because the shot turns out as the Lord wills, guid or bad.”

“You lippen ower muckle to the Lord's will, Davie, and do ower little yoursel'.”

“It'll no be sae wi' you, Tibbie, if you're to getaman—you'll ha'eto doa heap for yoursel'.”

The girl tossed her head, cast a look of scorn upon the giber, and pushed her way forward into pleasanter company.

The groups which followed were composed of older but not a whit sedater^r folk. Sturdy matrons whose backs had become bent with years of creelbearing—creels full of fish to sell to the farmers roundabout, or creels full of mussels for bait, carried up from the rocks and sands of distant bays, and then patiently “sheeled” (taken out of the shell) for the guidman—were as brisk and merry on this day as if they had travelled backward in the path of years, and found themselves young and marriageable again.

The jokes were not quite so simple or quite so modest as those of the younger folk; the elders were bolder, and ventured on many coarsenesses which an unwedded lad or lass dared not have uttered. The freedom was not vicious, however; it was thoroughly good-natured, and it was mingled with serious discussion as to the price of fish and of provisions generally, with sad refer-

ences to the loss of tackle on the fishing stations, a grumble at the water-bailies, or at the deficiencies of the harbour, and an occasional exclamation of good wishes for the couple whose 'bridal they had met to celebrate.

As the last of the crowd descended the hill, Skipper Dan turned to the Laird.

"You might come down to see the folk at their diversion," he said; "it would please them, and it'll do you nae ill."

"With pleasure," exclaimed Dalmahoy; "it is one of my greatest delights and privileges to share in the amusements and daily concerns of the people."

So, when the ladies had been satisfactorily settled in the gigs—Grace drove herself—and had started homeward, the Laird and the skipper, Colin and the minister, proceeded to join the fishers at the inn. Ailie followed after hastily putting things a little to rights in the cottage.

The scene was homely; it was made bright and happy by the spirit of thorough enjoy-

ment which prevailed. The pleasure of the moment was the dominant power in every heart, and voices were loud and faces were full of smiles.

A long room—or rather two rooms in one, for a wooden partition had been removed for the occasion—was divided by a long table, which was laden with huge rounds of roast and boiled beef, greens and potatoes, and a favourite dish known as “scratch” (chopped potatoes boiled with suet, and mixed with oatmeal); bottles of whiskey side by side with bottles of “sma’ yull”—a thin pungent liquor, very different from the washystuff generally sold as common beer. The order of drinking was to take a glass of the whiskey neat, and to wash it down with half a tumbler full of the ale. The most frequent demand at the inn was “half a mutchkin” (of whiskey) and a bottle of sma’ yull.

The room had a low roof crossed by strong beams. The walls were covered with a dingy brown paper splashed with flowers, which had been once brilliant yellow and scarlet, but

were now oppressively dull. Above the mantelpiece was a painting—"The Port of London." It was a busy scene, crowded with ships and smacks, all nicely balanced one on top of the other, and looking as if in imminent danger of toppling over. The sky was a rich washing-blue, the water streaky blue and white. But the genius of the artist had been concentrated upon one grand effect, the representation of a man standing up in a small boat, his shadow reflected in the water. It was wonderful how he stood on his head, for you saw as much in the water as out of it, of the man, the boat, and the oar which nobody held (the man had no doubt dropped it when he stood up to display the shadow); the whole suggested that the artist, moved by an inspiration, had turned the canvas upside down, and so produced this marvellous effect.

There was another picture, an old engraving of Buckingham Palace—the glass broken, so that the paper was black with dust. The walls were further ornamented with the

glaring show-cards of different brewers, indicating that there was no partiality on the part of the landlord. The ale which he supplied was from a local brewer who had no show-card, but it was very good ale for all that.

Places were scrambled for and taken without the least regard to precedence, except that certain lads wanted to be beside certain lasses, and that the skipper, Dalmahoy, and the minister occupied the head of the table, whilst Habbie Gowk took his seat at the foot, thus electing himself croupier, or vice-chairman of the feast.

One ruddy-faced dame, who felt weak after the excitement of the previous proceedings, helped herself to a glass of whiskey, muttering at the same time—

“Whatsoever we eat or drink, may we do it all to the glory of——”

She swallowed the remainder of the sentence and the contents of the glass. She was perhaps a little hypocritical, but she was not in the least ribald in asking a blessing upon

her dram ; mere habit had more to do with it than anything else.

The minister asked a blessing—he had discretion enough to be brief—and the company proceeded to pay the highest compliment to their host by eating with good appetite, and with much relish, if somewhat noisily.

“ Choots, man ! your fingers are a’ thumbs gi’e me the knife,” cried Red Sandy, snatching the carver out of the hands of the young fisher, whose mind was too much occupied with Peg Johnstone to permit him to pay proper heed to the joint before him.

Half a dozen smart girls waited at the table, and the guests helped themselves so freely that they were speedily served.

“ Gie’s a whang o’ beef here,” was the most frequent exclamation, and the business of eating progressed rapidly, amid much clatter of knives and plates and palates.

The eating finished, steaming toddy was served round in yellow jugs. Glasses were filled, and there was a general health-drinking, which necessitated the rapid and repeated

filling of the glasses—much to the satisfaction of the company.

“Here’s to ye, skipper,” shouts Habbie from the foot of the table, adding with the air of a man who felt that he was the equal of any other, if not better, “and here’s to you, Laird—and to you, minister; may nane o’ us ever see a waur day than this.”

That was a toast in which everybody joined very heartily.

“And here’s to the new minister o’ Drumlie-mont, and the bonnie lass he’s married,” cries Habbie again, pleased with any opportunity to refill his glass; “may they ha’e many bairns, and never ken an empty pot or a cauld hearthstone.”

There was great enthusiasm at this, and sly interchanges of the sentiment between the lads and the lasses at the table. The skipper nodded and drank, looking pleased. The Laird felt that it was incumbent upon him to say something, and he rose to his feet.

“What’s wrang noo?” whispered several voices.

“Whisht! the Laird’s going to gi’e us a toast,” answered others; and there was silence.

The Laird cleared his throat, and was distinctly heard in every corner of the room. He spoke with much suavity, a little becoming hesitation, and with some degree of gracious condescension to equality, behind which lay a sense of personal superiority that nothing could affect.

The present was an occasion of very great importance to him, and of very deep interest. In the first place, his son had that day gone through the most solemn and most binding ceremony of life—in fact, he had been married, and married to the most charming and most winning girl in the county, the daughter of his good friend Thorston, [Boisterous cheers and Hear, hear’s.] Although his own conduct in this matter had been somewhat severely criticised—nay, condemned by certain members of his family——

“Never heed, Laird, you’ll get ower ’t,” cried Tak’-it-easy Davie, with approving patronage.

The Laird smiled and bowed.

He had no doubt that he would get over it ; indeed, he was sure he had got over it, for he hoped—nay, he believed—that the people of Rowanden, whom he had had the pleasure of feasting with on this auspicious day, and whom he had now the pleasure of addressing—he believed that they would regard his conduct in this affair as another of the many proofs he had given that he trusted and respected the people, and that he adhered firmly to the principle with which he had begun his career—of the usefulness of which they were the best judges—that the greatest happiness of the greatest number ought to be the ruling thought of all action, social or political, public or private.

There was vast enthusiasm evoked by this noble sentiment ; the cheers and the clatter, and clinking of glasses, were loud and prolonged.

“ He speaks like a book,” observed Muckle Will Johnstone, and his comrades echoed his commendation.

The Laird was profoundly gratified, and proceeded with even more satisfaction than before.

“Thank you, my good friends all; but I must say something which will displease you, because it tells against yourselves—or rather against human nature generally.”

“Let’s hear’t, let’s hear’t,” was the general cry.

“Well, you know that I disapprove of class distinctions [Hear, hear], and especially of that distinction which is broadly indicated by the words Rich and Poor. What are riches? What is poverty? The honest man is rich although he may not have a penny; the dishonest man is poor although he possess millions!”

“I’m no sure but I’d like to be the dishonest one in siccan a case,” muttered Davie.

“Whisht!” growled his neighbour; and Dalmahoy went on.

“Now, what is it makes a man—or woman—really rich or poor? Why, the possession or the want of happiness! Life is a mere

question of happiness, and whatever makes us happy makes us rich. We have ourselves to blame, then, if we are not rich. What makes us unhappy but selfish envy—the bitterness with which we question the right of others to more wealth or pleasure than we possess? ‘What right have they,’ we cry, ‘to more than us? Why, indeed, should not the positions be reversed?’—which is, in fact, what we desire. We do not envy those who have less than us—we do not suffer any pangs at sight of them. I have seen the millionaire rolling along in his carriage, and envying the sturdy peasant in the field—but it is his wealth of health that he grudges him. ‘What right has this fellow,’ he cries, ‘to a sound digestion and steady nerves when I am as I am?’ The peasant pretty generally returns the compliment, and grudges the poor millionaire the fine dinners which he cannot eat. We rarely thank Heaven for being as we are. When the fit of gratitude is upon us, we only say, ‘Thank Heaven we are no worse than we are!’”

He made a deliberate pause, and there was a hesitating cheer, as if the folk were doubtful whether or not he was making fun of them, or preaching to them, which was quite as bad.

“My desire has always been to make people happy,” the Laird resumed, “and that is why I have turned a deaf ear to the objections already alluded to, and that is why, sinking all distinctions, I gave my willing consent to the marriage which has been celebrated this day. I hope and pray that the result will be a happy one for all parties concerned. [Loud cheers and “So say we.”] I drink your health, ladies and gentlemen, good matches for all the bonnie lasses I see before me, and a good fishing season to all.”

The speech was a great success, and the Laird discreetly determined to leave at the moment when he was most popular. As he made his way out, amidst loud and hearty congratulations, he halted beside Habbie, and said in an undertone, but quite carelessly—

“I would like to see you up at Dalmahoy,

Habbie. I have some interest in this Methven business, and if you are the heir——”

“If I am the heir!—there’s nae doubt about it, Laird. Writer Currie told me, and gi’ed me two pounds erls to let him take up the case for me, and you ken he’s no like to part wi’ siller for nothing. There’s no a doubt o’t; and I’m to get out a vollum o’ my poems on the strength o’t.”

That had long been Habbie’s favourite dream and ambition—to see his vagrant sheets neatly bound up in blue and gold—preserved for posterity!—to look at the volume in the windows and on the counters of the bookshops—to hear the folk speaking about it—to know that they were looking at him as somebody “by-ordinar’”—and to read the notices in the papers. Ah, it was worth coming into a fortune for that! So cried the simple vanity of the man.

“Put me down for half a dozen copies,” said the Laird; “but I’ll be glad to see you any time about the Methven affair. I may be able to help you.”

“Sang about noo,” was the general cry, on the departure of Dalmahoy.

“Come awa’, Habbie ; gie’s a new skirl,” says Ailie.

The poet sang “Cuttie’s Wedding,” in a somewhat cracked voice, but with a geniality which covered all deficiencies. Every word was associated by the audience with the event of the day, and the rollicking chorus which followed each verse was taken up vigorously and loudly, in tune and out of tune, bodies swaying to the rhythm of words and air.

“Now then, Tibbie, let’s ha’e the ‘Flowers o’ the Forest,’” commanded Habbie, it being his privilege to call for the next song.

“Man, I’m that herse, there’s no a sang in my thrapple.”

“Take a dram, and that’ll clear the pipes.”

She did so, saying at the same time—

“Shut your een, neighbours, and you’ll no hear me.”

She knew very well that she was accounted one of the best singers in the village, and so she could make pretences which would have

been mercilessly ridiculed if made by any less favoured one.

The song went round. Muckle Jean Houston—a man in stature and muscle—had a harsh voice and no sense of tune, but she obeyed the order of the day, and sang “My Love’s awa’ for a Sodger”—a very pathetic ballad, which was not altogether spoiled even by her voice.

It was Tak’-it-easy Davie’s turn next.

“I canna sing,” he said.

“You’ll ha’e to sing or tell a story,” shouted Habbie authoritatively.

Davie’s eyes danced with fun.

“I canna sing,” he repeated; “but if I maun tell a story, I’ll just say that I would like to hear Muckle Jean sing that sang ower again.”

Muckle Jean threatened him with her fist; and Davie kept out of her way for a week afterwards.

The tables were removed, or thrust into corners, in order to make room for a dance. Habbie got his fiddle, and whilst he was

scraping and screwing it into tune, partners were chosen for the reel. Ailie was amongst the first on her feet ; the old woman looked as if she had grown young again, so light and firm were her movements.

“ Come awa', Wilkie,” she said to a hoary-bearded giant, who had been steadily and silently applying himself to the toddy-jug ; “ your mistress says ye've grown a stiff-kneed old sot ; but I never saw ye leave a boat's christening or a wedding, without letting the young folk see how ye could shak' your foot, and you'll surely no be ahintheand at the wedding o' Thorston's lass. Come awa' ; let the wife see that you're no sae useless as she thinks.”

“ I'll dance the Reel o' Tulloch wi' ony ane in the room,” said Wilkie, with the gravity of a precentor on his trial. “ I'll do't on the table there wi' a' the glasses standing—I ha'e done't many a time.”

“ I ken'd there was spunk in you yet.”

The old man got up solemnly, balanced himself, and then took his place in the reel.

Habbie struck up "Miss Johnstone," and away went the dozen sets with lusty "Hoochs!" and nimble legs. The animation and enthusiasm would have made a sick man well. Old Wilkie forgot his rheumatism, and danced like a youth, whilst Ailie was as fresh as she had been in her teens.

Habbie changed rapidly into the "Marquis of Huntley," "Tulloch," "Bob o' Fettercairn," "Miss Parkes," and "Brechin Castle;" and at each change the reel became more furious, the voices louder, the springs higher, and the general action wilder and more reckless.

And so the fun goes on until twelve o'clock; then the "hood-sheaf," or parting glass, is served round—to keep out the cold; all join hands and sing "Auld Lang Syne," most of the singers regretting that the diversion is over, and that the round of work and worry begins again. Those who are able to walk home, do so; those who are not, are assisted by their friends.

Several lads and lasses dated from that day the beginning or the conclusion of their wooing. Half a dozen weddings took place within a month.

CHAPTER II.

OLD LETTERS.



RACE WISHART was sitting in her room by the fireless grate ; on a little table by her side was a lamp, and an open desk, the contents of which were tossed about in a confused way, very unlike the orderly owner.

She was still in the dress she had worn at the marriage ; her hair, long and luxuriant, had been loosened, and was hanging over her shoulders and down her back ; her elbows rested on her knees, and in her hand she held a bundle of letters.

They were Walter Burnett's letters ; innocent enough in all conscience, beginning with the rude school-boy scrawl, in which he had asked her to help him in some trick or out of

some scrape ; passing into a less distinct but more decisive form during his studies in Edinburgh, whence he wrote descriptions of his college-life and friends ; then developing into serious expressions of his faith, opinions, and hopes of the great work he might be able to do. There were many words of affection in the letters, but not a word more than a brother might have written to a sister. Yet she had magnified the value of those words, and treasured them. She had been made aware of her mistake, and still she had preserved the letters. He had not thought of asking for them—he valued them so little ; that was hard upon her who valued them so much. But, inconsistently, she was glad he had not asked for them ; she wished to keep them as the tokens of an old and very sweet dream. She had thought more than once of destroying them ; she felt that it ought to be done ; and yet the old dream lived so much in her heart that she found it very difficult to sacrifice these memorials of it.

To-day she had resolved that the sacrifice

must be made—for her own sake, if for no better reason, in order to remove all palpable sign that the realization of the dream had once been her brightest prospect. She thought that it was wrong to keep these letters now, unless Teenie had given her permission; and for that, of course, she would never be able to ask. With a sore heart she gathered them together, determined to burn them.

She looked over them for the last time, and cried. A word here, a line there, bore such a different meaning now from the interpretation she had put upon it long ago. Strange, that the same words could assume such different shapes. They were very precious to her, notwithstanding, and she lingered over them tenderly. Then she remembered that the man was Teenie's husband, and she placed them in the grate—very fondly, as a mother might lay a dead child in its coffin. She set her teeth and lips close, struck a match, and applied it to the papers.

How slow they are to ignite—how they resist the effort to destroy them, as if they were possessed of life, and accused her of ingratitude, base and cruel!—so she thinks. How often they overcome the fire, and lie with blackened edges, twittering into silence, their scarred faces appealing for redemption!

But she must be resolute. No mercy; the command has been given; they are doomed. She separates them—shakes them apart ruthlessly, and applies the light again. A bright flame shoots up, as if, grown spiteful and angry, those voices of so many pleasures and pains had resolved to meet their fate. Now a wrathful twittering, and through the flame the black and white films shape themselves into the familiar face she loved so well, suggesting memories of the dear hopes now dispelled, of golden visions now proved vain.

She stirs the ashes, and still some fragment with dark brown centre, branching off to black and rugged edges, shows a word, or part of a word, scarcely legible, yet how suggestive of days and thoughts which

trouble the memory, in spite of this effort to annihilate them all !

She turns away with a sigh, and would fain forget. The ashes will be swept up by the housemaid, and disappear in the dust-hole ; the memories will linger and recur at unexpected corners of life, filling the soul with sweet and bitter reflections.

Grace was a long time looking at the white ashes in the grate. Life seemed to her at that moment very hard—it seemed to be spent in getting out of one trouble into another ; a year of sorrow for a moment's pleasure appeared to be the condition under which she existed. She wondered if it were different with others ; how sad they must be if they were like her !

But having made the sacrifice, she was not going to mope or whine over it—she disliked people who whined and wasted life in wishing that the moon were green cheese, and that they might have it to eat. She liked people to take things just as they found them, and to do cheerfully whatever they

felt to be right and best under the circumstances.

She meant to do so; she was determined to do so, but fate had been very hard upon her, and it was not easy to submit to its decrees in her case without some cry of pain. She had felt that it was right to release Walter from his engagement; and she knew that, having done so, it was also right and best that she should love Teenie, and try to make her happy. But although she tried to do all this with a cheerful face, she could not help the sad heart. One knows so much more than can be realized; the path may be very straight and clear before us, and yet difficult to take, when it compels us to turn away from all that is dearest to us.

Well, she had made one step forward in the new path; she had burned the letters, and so destroyed all material sign of the old life and the old dreams. She must turn away from them altogether: and still she lingered over them, stirring the filmy ashes, and wondering if *he* would ever think, or

ever understand, how very much she had sacrificed in order to insure his happiness according to his wishes. Would he ever think of the old time when she had been his promised wife? Would he ever regret that he had chosen another?

But this was altogether wrong and wicked. He was now Teenie's husband, and she must not even think of him otherwise than as a brother, and of Teenie as a sister—all the dearer because there was the danger of regarding her as the cause of the present suffering, and of hating her for it.

That was the theory of the position; but then weak woman's nature asserted itself, and poor Grace cried herself to sleep because the moon was not made of green cheese, and she could not have it to eat. There is such a difference between seeing what we ought to do and doing it.

She got up in the morning, however, quite resolved upon following the path before her, humbly and bravely, without ever casting a look behind, or ever giving a thought to what

might have been, if she could help it. There were duties enough for her to attend to, and, perhaps, more zeal in discharging them would prevent her thinking about the past, and so help to cure the wound which Walter had caused.

She attended to her mother's comforts first, as usual ; and then she went out to see some of her pensioners in the village. Her first visit was paid to Buckie Willie, who had been lying for some weeks under the affliction of acute rheumatism, and cursing fiercely all the time in his pain. The dram was the only thing which gave him relief, so he declared ; he scoffed at medicine and blisters, and kept calling for the dram in the intervals of his swearing at the pangs with which he was visited.

He controlled himself to some extent when Grace appeared, and endeavoured to show his respect for her by restraining the oaths with which he saluted each pang. She had brought brandy ; a dose was administered to him—a very moderate dose, he thought—and

he declared himself so much better that he would like another, to be made quite well.

Grace promised the second dose by-and-by, and he submitted—until she should go away; but the pain seized him again.

“I’m sorry to see you suffering so much still, Willie,” she said in her sweet voice.

“Suffer!—it’s no possible that—ye ken the place—can be waur nor this. I’d be glad to try.”

“Hush!”

She could not help smiling, although she was shocked.

Buckie Willie composed his features into a seriously calm expression.

“Noc, what *could* the Lord mean when He invented rheumatics?” he said quite gravely.

“Like other ills of life, Willie, to chasten us.”

“Chasten us!—it’s a heap more like to make deevils o’ us! When the Lord made rheumatics to chasten us, it’s a pity He didna learn us how to appreciate it.”

“You must not speak that way, Willie, or I shall not come to see you again.”


She was startled by the fierceness and irreligious exclamations of the man.

“You maun forgie me,” he groaned ; “it’s no easy to mind the carritchers wi’ the rheumatics stanging me in this way. Say you’ll forgie me, Miss Wishart, and I’ll try to be quiet, though it’s no easy.”

He clenched his teeth in the bitter effort to restrain his cries of pain, and she granted her forgiveness. How strangely like her own suffering was this, although expressed in different fashion !

CHAPTER III.

WAITING.

RACE went on to a cottage at the upper end of the village. It stood a little apart from the others, and everything about it was singularly trim—too trim; there was a want of life in the exceeding orderliness of the place. It seemed as if no foot had crossed the threshold since it had been cleaned; no voice or face indicated that the cottage was inhabited. From the door or window there was a clear view of the harbour bar, the lighthouse, and a long reach of sea.

She lifted the latch and entered, her foot leaving a mark upon the sand which covered the stone step at the door. There was the same painful trimness inside as out; everything rigidly fixed in its place, everything

polished and shining with almost obtrusive cleanliness.

A woman of about fifty, in a neat gray dress, her white hair plaited like a girl's, and not covered by the cap generally worn by women of her years, advanced to meet the visitor with a quiet, pleased smile.

"You are very kind, Miss Wishart, to come and see me so often."

"It's a pleasure to me, Mysie ; how do you feel yourself now ?"

There was a strangely subdued and submissive smile on Mysie's calm face, which was still bonnie, and had been bonnier.

"About my usual ; nothing to complain of, and nothing to boast about. Will you no tak' a seat ?"

Grace took the chair, and entered into a general conversation with Mysie about the ailments, losses, and successes of the fishers. Mysie was one of the ablest nurses, and always ready to help her neighbours, whilst in the big houses roundabout her assistance was frequently sought in cases of illness. Her

peculiarities were known and respected ; her retired mode of life, and her fancies about the house she occupied, were never alluded to in her presence. It was said that she was " some crack," but there was no sign of madness in her gentle manner, and her devotion to any of the neighbours who might be in trouble was certainly a most benevolent form of insanity.

Thirty years ago, Mysie, then a bright-eyed, handsome girl, married her cousin, Bob Keith. There was not a gentler, shyer girl in the village than Mysie, and there was not a more good-natured or more rollicking fellow than her husband. He had a brother, Alick Keith, who was skipper of a schooner engaged in the Baltic trade, and who was reputed to be the most daring seaman ever known—he would sail upon a Friday ! He would defy all storm signals, and all presages of bad weather or an unlucky voyage. Once a strange dove, weary and starved, had settled upon his bowsprit, coming from nobody knew where, and although his men implored him to

put back into harbour, he refused! In fact, there was no end to his defiance of all the laws which had hitherto controlled the skip-pers and sailors of Rowanden, and there was apparently no end to his success. Nevertheless discreet old fishers, who knew what was what much better than these young innovators, shook their heads and declared—

“There’s nae guid’ll come o’ yon loon.”

Barely three weeks after his marriage Bob Keith was offered by his brother the post of chief mate on board the “*Jessie Bell*,” of Kingshaven, with a small share in the profits.

The offer was a good one, and Bob was anxious to accept; he only hesitated because he had been so recently married. Mysie would have liked him to refuse, because of the character which Alick bore for recklessness in seamanship; but she was too young a wife to know how to exert her authority. She could not deny that Alick’s offer was an excellent one, or that it was the right thing, even for her sake, that her husband should take advantage of any opportunity to make way in

the world. Bob accepted his brother's offer.

The "Jessie Bell" sailed, Mysie watching it from the cottage door until it disappeared over the sea.

Some months afterwards, the skipper of another Kingshaven vessel reported that in the midst of a terrific gale, to avoid which he had wisely tacked, he had seen the "Jessie Bell" attempting to enter the Baltic; then suddenly he had lost sight of her. From that day nothing was ever heard of the vessel or any of its crew.

Mysie listened to the news, dumb and white. Her own parents, and the mother of Alick and Bob, were overwhelmed with grief. They went into mourning, and lamented the deaths of the two promising youths.

Mysie was silent, but she would *not* put on mourning. She arranged her cottage with scrupulous care to the position which everything had occupied on the day when Bob went away, and attended to her ordinary work quietly and resolutely. She said nothing

concerning what she hoped or expected ; she simply placed things so, and went on with her work—waiting. She served her parents faithfully, she gave more than a daughter's duty to the mother of her husband. They died : Mysie did not change ; the house was still in order, just as when *he* had left it. Many good offers of marriage were made to her, and they were declined very resolutely. She was still waiting for him.

She never said that she was waiting ; she would neither speak about the “ Jessie Bell,” nor listen to any one else speaking of it. The moment she heard the name mentioned, she would go away—without fuss, but in a manner which clearly showed that it was a subject she did not wish to enter upon.

Her house was kept with a tender care, ready for the wanderer whenever he might appear ; the duties which fell to her were performed with alertness and cheerfulness. The folk pitied her, and shook their heads, lamenting her strange hallucination. By-and-by people became so accustomed to her ways

that they scarcely noticed them : and, with the exception of the house, and her firm refusal to leave it or alter it in the slightest degree, there was nothing odd in her ways, and much that was kind and useful.

At early morning or late in the evening, Mysie was often seen standing at her door, looking out to sea ; during a storm she was always there, whether it happened late or early. Whenever there was a wreck, Mysie was the first to know it—the first to give warning, and to call for help—the first down at the shore, giving the aid of a strong and intelligent man in launching the life-boat, inspiring the crew by her energetic presence, or in preparing signals—ropes—assisting bravely in everything which could further the good work of rescue.

Mysie eagerly scrutinized the face of every creature who was carried ashore by the boat, or cast on to the sands and rocks by the great angry waves. She looked as if for the face of some dear friend, whom she never found. But there was no murmur of disap-

pointment, no word of complaint on her part ; she went on with her work as vigorously as if there had been no hope of her own dispelled.

She had ceased to gather mussels and limpets for bait on the death of her father ; nursing and weaving stockings for the neighbours and the farmers' wives gave her ample occupation. Her calm ways and her skill earned for her the title of "the Wise Woman," and she was often consulted by the young folk about the most delicate as well as the most ridiculous dilemmas.

Whatever delusion or hope she entertained regarding her husband's fate, she did not trouble any one with it. The old love remained ; but she did her work bravely.

"You have been very patient, Mysie," Grace said after a pause ; and it was the first time she had ever made allusion to the woman's past ; then dreamily and speaking to herself, "I wonder if it is better to wait, hoping, than to know that waiting and hoping are vain and wrong."

Mysie lifted her eyes from the rough stocking she was knitting, and, with a strange inward look, gazed first out through the window toward the sea, and then at her visitor.

"You're looking poorly, Miss Wishart," she said; "I noticed it when you came in; I'm doubting you're no weel."

"I am not very well, but I shall be better in a few days."

"Something has gane wrang wi' you."

"Yes—something which I thought would not have troubled me, because I was doing what I knew to be right; and yet it is vexing me, and making me feel unlike myself—making me feel as if it would have been better to have done wrong."

She shuddered at herself as she spoke these words in a whisper.

A pause, during which Mysie's knitting dropped into her lap, and her soft gray eyes remained fixed upon Grace with a questioning expression.

"Have you to wait—like me?"

"No; I must neither wait nor hope. I

think it would be pleasant to change places with you, Mysie."

"And you ha'e siller and land, and youth, and a' thing that ane can crave for."

"Not everything—none of us have that ; but I would rather have a light heart with a light pouch than all the wealth in the world."

"Better a heavy heart than a heavy conscience."

"Which kills soonest?" said Grace, with some bitterness in her sweet voice ; "if any choice were given to me, I think that is the one I would choose."

"I'll tell you, Miss Wishart, what I have never told to living creature before ; it'll maybe help you, and you have been guid to me. When the news came that Bob's ship was wrecked and every soul aboard lost, I thought it would be easier to die than to live. Then I wouldna believe it was true, because I couldna think that God would be so hard upon puir creatures that had never done ony harm they ken'd o'. So I put the house in

order, and waited for him to come hame. But he didna come. The deevil was aye putting ill thoughts in my head, and I wrought late and early to keep him out. Syne, I found that without a bawbee I was able to help my neighbours, and that they were grateful and kind to me. Syne, I came to understand that my work was needed for others, and so I had been left, waiting. I'm waiting and watching aye, but doing my best a' the while; and though I'm waiting yet, I ken that when he comes it'll be to tak' me awa' frae this place. It was lang, lang or I could understand that, but I learned it at last, and I'm content to be quiet and bide my time to gang hame to him."

"Ay—but if you had to wait, Mysie, without hope—to wait knowing that you could never meet him again—what then?"

"I canna say. I think I would ha'e waited a' the same, sure that He would learn me how to thole in His time."

The simple unquestioning faith of the woman who had suffered so much did Grace

good. Her heart was purer when she left the house than when she had entered it. Thinking of Mysie's life, she became the more resolute in directing her steps into the narrow path which lay before her.

"It is strange," she reflected, "that the calm, pure temperament which makes us morally grand, is only found in one who has suffered much affliction ; as if it were necessary that we should suffer in order to be good or wise."

As she passed through the village, grateful voices saluted her with kind inquiries for herself and home ; pleasant smiles showed her the happiness which her presence gave ; the bairns ran to her with merry, eager faces—with some selfishness, too, for they knew that she generally carried a packet of "Peter Reid's rock," a sweetmeat famous along the east coast.

She was comforted and encouraged ; her foot was firmer on the ground, as she made her way homeward, and the world was much brighter than it had appeared in the morning.

She seemed to waken to a new sense, and she was thinking how full the world is of lovers whom we never know, how full of loveliness that we never see, and of music that we never hear. There are the people we love or who love us at a glance, and whom we never see again; there are the countless beauties of nature through which we pass unobserving; the forms and shades—ever varying with the day—of flowers, trees, mountain, valley, and sea; there are the bright songs of the birds always making the air musical, and to which we so seldom give an attentive ear. How much of all this passes back to the Giver, unseen, unenjoyed, and unappreciated! When His glories pass so, what wonder that the greatest efforts of a poor human heart should often pass away unkenneled?

“But God sees and knows,” said Grace; and something of the old sweet light dawned upon her face.

CHAPTER IV.

HOME.



ARVEST work had begun when they returned. The crops were yellow, and falling steadily under the scythe or reaping-machine; the fields were dry and parched-looking; the heather on the moors was crisp, and crackled under the feet. The opal sea flashed its many colours in the eyes, dazzling them with its splendour; in the hot noontide the sound of waves was refreshing to the senses.

Dan met them at the station.

"Glad to see you back," he said; "I hope you're both weel."

He spoke as calmly as if they had not been out of his sight five minutes. Walter gave his hand a hearty shake, and Teenie did the

same—no more, for kissing and hugging were quite out of their way, and the skipper would have been scandalized exceedingly if his daughter had offered to kiss him there on the platform before all the people.

She was looking bright and happy, radiant indeed ; and the blush which covered her cheeks, as various friends saluted them and wished them happiness, added to the brightness of her eyes and to the joy of her smile. She was not at all awkward ; she nodded to old acquaintances, ran up to fish-wives and fisher-loons with cheery greetings ; although they were awed by the splendour of her silk gown, and almost afraid to speak to the lady, she was just the old, wild, fierce, and kindly Teenie that she had been before there was the slightest likelihood of her becoming wife to the Laird's son.

“She's no stuck-up ava,” said Tak'-it-easy Davie, who happened to be on the platform, and to receive a warm greeting from the bride ; “by my faith, I wish she had married me.”

“You, you guid-for-naething loon!” cried old Meg Carnoustie, who, with creel of fish on her back, had been one of the first to whom the bride had spoken; “she’d be sair wanting a man that took you, let alone Thorston’s lass.”

“Wait a wee,” says Davie, with a sagacious nod.

Then Teenie would bow to the grand folk with as much ease and self-possession as if she had been born in a palace, instead of the cottage at the Norlan’ Head. True, she had very little to say to the grand folk; but then they had as little to say to her, and were rather disappointed that she did not show any gratitude for their condescension in noticing her at all.

“She’s a saucy creature,” muttered Mrs. Dubbieside, “and has no sense of her station at all. One would think she was used to being married, she takes it so easy—or else she’s thinking yet that she’s the Methven heir.”

Poor Teenie had not the remotest thought

about George Methven, or his troublesome fortune ; neither had she the remotest idea that she was not behaving with the becoming propriety of a newly-married girl. She was happy, and she never suspected that she ought to act or look otherwise than as she felt.

Walter was awkward and shy enough for both parties ; and he had to confess to himself that—although he could find no reason for it—he would have been better pleased if Teenie had been a little less boisterous. He had an unconscious sense that a lavender silk dress with a long train, and a high bonnet with orange-blossoms, did not agree well with a manner which suggested a skipping-rope. His sense of incongruity or the ridiculous was pained.

He shut his eyes immediately to that, and admired—or rather loved the more—the good heart and generous nature which were quite unconscious of the incongruity between silks and fish-scales. He was grateful that Teenie remained unchanged.

Nevertheless, he found himself as awkward and bashful as when he had gone up to receive his first prize at college, knowing that the eyes of a crowd of his class-mates and their friends were upon him. It was a self-consciousness which he felt was contemptible, and he tried to get rid of it, but could not.

He was heartily glad when they were seated in the Dalmahoy gig which had been graciously sent for them by the Laird, and were driving at a good pace up to Drumlie-mount.

It seemed very strange to her when they turned the corner of the road away from the Norlan' Head, and moved in what was comparatively a strange direction to her. Yet she was going home!—going to the place where her life was to pass in the common round of cares and duties—going to the place in which all her thoughts and hopes must be in future centred. It was a new world full of bewildering novelty, and yet surrounded by the dearest and most precious of old associations. It was almost uncomfort-

able to turn away from the old home to the new. Here was one of her vague cravings gratified, and somehow it amused and puzzled her rather than gave her satisfaction.

Ailie had been at the house for a week, scrubbing, cleaning, and brushing, until she had almost driven the one servant lass "clean out of her judgment," as the girl declared.

Ailie was at the gate to receive them—she had been there many times during the morning, looking out for them. Her mutch (cap) was snow white, and the frills were as stiff as starch and piping could make them—forming a white, prim halo, round her ancient and kindly face.

The garden was in trim order now, and the roses were in full bloom on the house. They passed up the newly-gravelled path—gravelled with small, round, pale lavender stones, which rolled and rattled under the feet—and into the house.

When they crossed the threshold, Walter put his arm round his wife, and, kissing her, whispered one word—

“ Home ! ”

What a delightful sound it had, spoken by him in that place, in that loving voice ! The sunlight streamed in upon them, a round mote-white beam fell on them, and the perfume of roses and honeysuckle mingled with the word, and they were always afterward associated with it in her mind.

Home ! she had never known how much there was in the word until that moment. There she was to be queen, and live happy ever after. It was not the gorgeous palace she had dreamed about, but it was a reality ; and at this minute she felt as if she would have been quite content if it had been a mud cabin, or a shieling of wattles and heather.

They went into the parlour : the window was wide open, and the perfume of roses and honeysuckle filled the room. She threw off her bonnet ; he took off his hat and light overcoat, thrust his fingers through his hair, and looked at her fondly, proudly.

“ It’s not much of a place, is it, Teenie ?—but it’s our own,” he said, with a laugh.

“ And that’s everything,” said she, laughing too, and examining each article in the room, mentally estimating its cost—without the least thought that more or less was anything to her.

He looked at her with loving admiration.

“ Yes, Teenie, that is everything, so long as we are true to each other. Do you think you can be quite satisfied here ?”

“ Satisfied !—I’m just that proud and happy I could greet for very joy and—I dinna ken what.”

Her eyes and voice were full of tears, which made her very beautiful, although they were not allowed to find vent.

“ I wonder if you will always think so ?” he said, reflectively.

She looked at him with that winning expression which a pretty woman’s face obtains when mouth and eyes form an O of wonder, rebuke, and love.

There was only one answer to such a look, and he made it—he hugged her.

“ There,” she cried, pretending to struggle

for freedom, "let me begin my duties at once, and go into the kitchen to see about the dinner."

"Confound the dinner—Ailie will see to that for to-day at any rate."

But Teenie's restless spirit would not consent to that arrangement. She was eager for the fun of showing her authority as "the mistress," as the maid-of-all-work called her, and eager to examine every corner and treasure of her home.

She changed her dress with commendable rapidity, and in a neat house-dress of simple cotton pranced downstairs. She glanced into the study, which Walter called his workshop, and there, as she expected, saw him already among his books. He made a movement as if to approach her, but she gave him a merry look, and closed the door between them.

The husband smiled, and turned again to his noiseless but most eloquent and dearest friends—books.

He was unspeakably happy. He was

beginning the life of which he had often dreamed, and beginning it in entire accordance with his own wishes. Married to the woman he loved, and appointed to the work he loved, he had no fears for the future, no doubt of accomplishing some part at least of his ambitious designs—the designs being only to prove himself useful in helping his fellows to realize that mere life is a blessed gift—that to the true-hearted life is full of gracious sympathies and helpers.

He was not blind to the possibilities, or even probabilities, of failure ; but he comforted himself with the reflection—

“ A man must fail in so many things, that to succeed in any one he must work hard and fast to accomplish a great number.”

He intended to accomplish a great number. Meanwhile, sitting in his cosy room, the open window admitting the lazy air, the hum of bees, and the perfume of flowers, he felt grateful for the mercies which surrounded him, and full of earnest resolutions. He thought that whenever he might be disposed

to discontent, he would only have to remember this day, and he would be cured.

Teenie made her way to the kitchen, and was received by Ailie with new exclamations of admiration and pleasure.

“Marriage has improved you just wonderful,” she declared; “’deed, I’m thinking I would like to get married mysel’.”

Teenie enjoyed the idea of Ailie getting married, and was very energetic superintending the dinner, examining the furnishing of the kitchen, and telling her old friend of the wonders she had seen in Edinburgh—of the castle on the top of the rock, the houses ten and twelve storeys high, the grand shops, three times bigger than anything in Kingshaven, and many other marvels which made Ailie’s eyes open wide in wonder.

That first dinner at home was very pleasant to the husband and wife, the little parlour was so bright, and they were so happy in themselves. Then they went out to the garden, and seated themselves under an apple-tree. He read; she played with her fingers, and

stared at the ground with an air of profound attention, but she was busy speculating about all she would have to do in the house, and not hearing a word of what he read. He discovered that by-and-by, and closed the book.

"You couldn't have been more inattentive if I had been reading one of my own sermons," he said, maliciously.

She felt very wicked, and could make no excuse. She just looked at him helplessly.

"We'll have all sorts of visitors to-morrow," he said changing the subject.

"What for?"

"Why to congratulate us, to quiz us, and to see if we haven't already repented our bargain."

"I wish they wouldn't come."

"So do I."

"Then why don't you tell them not to come? Whenever there was anybody I didn't want to come to the house, I told them to stay away."

“Arcadia!” laughed Walter; “we can’t do that, Teenie.”

“Why?”

“Because we must do a great many things we don’t want to do, in order not to give annoyance to others, and because these visits are signs of friendliness with which we ought to be pleased. I wonder Grace hasn’t been over this afternoon. She knows we are at home.”

Grace!—was he already wearying for her?

Teenie was silent; it seemed as if a shadow had crossed the bright sunlight.

She moved nearer to him, placed her hand on his, and looking into his face with such earnest eyes, she said softly—

“You’re not sorry, are you?”

“Sorry!—for what?”

“That—that we’re married now?”

He regarded her with an amused and puzzled expression.

“You dear, stupid, wee lassie, what could put such an absurd notion into your head? Why, if ever a man was permitted to know

perfect happiness on this earth, I am realizing it at this moment."

Her hand closed tightly upon his, and she laughed at herself. She did not know why, but his warmth, his look, and the mere words of his assurance gave her a feeling of intense relief.

CHAPTER V.

MORE SHADOWS.



HE calls of ceremony proved rather more of an affliction than Teenie had expected ; and much as she had wished before that they might be left alone, the wish was a great deal more fervent after the first half-dozen visitors had appeared.

The calls were made at uncertain hours—she was compelled to be always ready ; and she was obliged to pretend to be pleased to see people who, she felt, cared nothing at all about her, and for whom she could not care anything. Then she very speedily became aware of two facts ; that one half the callers came out of idle curiosity, and the other half out of a sort of pity for her husband—as if

they would show him that, although he had been foolish, they were magnanimous enough not to ignore him altogether. Very few seemed to come with any friendly disposition towards her.

Teenie didn't like this—it was humiliating to her, and she was irritated by it. If good-nature did not induce folk to desire to shake hands and wish them happy days, why should they fash themselves and her by coming at all? She did not want them.

She had not yet learned that as a wife she was bound to forget herself, and respect the civilities paid to her husband as much as if they were paid to herself.

The whole business of the calls was a disagreeable falsehood in her eyes, and several times Walter had serious difficulty in persuading her to appear. When she did appear she was silent almost to sullenness; she said "Thank you" to the good wishes which were expressed, but she said it like a parrot without soul or any touch of sensibility to the meaning of the words. Most of the visitors

went away with grim forebodings of a miserable future for the young minister.

“He’s caught a Tartar,” was the general exclamation.

Aunt Jane came, and Teenie could not abide her, she was so overwhelming with her patronage. Aunt Jane went away with the impression that Walter was worse than a fool—he was a donkey; and she experienced a sort of satisfaction in thinking that his harness would very soon gall him.

Widow Smyllie called, and Teenie hated her, she praised everything with such painfully sweet airs, and such thinly veiled contempt. The widow retired with the idea that Teenie was a dull, ignorant doll, of a very bad pattern.

The gentlemen were not nearly so difficult to deal with, Teenie thought; there was far more heartiness in their manner and voices than the ladies had shown; consequently she was much more herself with them, and they went away with the notion that young Dalmahoy had been lucky, all things considered.

General Forbes was quite charmed with the bride, and could scarcely believe that she was only a fisherman's daughter. He mumbled a pretty speech to her, in which he was sincere enough under the influence of her brave bright eyes, and pledged himself to be her knight-errant if ever she should need one.

Aunt Jane and the general had a fierce quarrel next day, on the subject of Walter's wife, and they parted mutually resolved never to speak to each other again. A similar resolution was usually formed by them once a month at least. But they were neighbours, they were both excellent whist-players, and somehow the terrible resolution was always forgotten in the course of a few days, during which each did severe penance in missing the favourite rubber and the sixpenny points.

Teenie was glad when the day was over, and the outer door closed for the night. She had never known anything so wearisome or so disagreeable as that day's proceedings.

What made it all the worse, she saw that Walter was not pleased with her share in the

performance, although he expressed no hint of disapprobation.

"I hope they'll never come back again," she said spitefully.

"They are not likely to come for some time."

"The longer they stay away, the better I'll be pleased. It's a shame that they should come vexing folk for no other end than just to see what you're like, and to price your dress and your furniture, as though such things were the whole measure of your worth. I saw them taking stock of me."

He did not reply immediately, and when he did, it was in a very serious tone.

"Those people came to us, Teenie, quite as much because they think it right to come, as because they wish to see what we are like. We must do what we think to be right, too—respect the first motive of these friendly visits, and try to forget or overlook any selfish thoughts which may mingle with it."

Teenie believed that he was right, but she was too much irritated just then to make

confession. Still she had a fancy that, when they found it pleasanter to be alone, people had no business to intrude unasked.

She was lighting the lamp ; he was sitting, book in hand, purposing to read as soon as it was lit.

“ It was a pity Grace did not come to-day,” he said, “ she would have been a great relief to you when you had to meet so many strangers, and she knows them all. I hope there is nothing the matter with her.”

Teenie almost allowed the globe to drop over the glass funnel. He seemed to be always thinking of her ; nothing could go wrong but Grace would have set it right. The mood she was in made her feel spiteful for a minute. Then, she checked herself, remembering what he had said last night. She took a healthier view of his words, and recognized in them his kindly anxiety for her comfort.

She would have been better pleased, though, if he had suggested any one but Grace.

Next day they walked over to Dalmahoy.

A hot glaring sun, the earth throbbing with heat, woolly cloudlets floating drowsily against a gray sky.

They took a short cut through a field of barley, where the harvesters were busy at work. One half of the grain had been cut, and now studded the field in rows of stooks, round which half a dozen touzy-headed bairns were romping; the other half was rapidly falling under the long sweeps of the scythes. The voices of the harvesters were loud and mirthful, and an occasional snatch of song cheered on the work. The three scythesmen bent sturdily to their task: it was a point of honour amongst them how straight should be the line of standing grain each left behind him, and how short the stubble. Each scythesman was followed by an "uptaker," a woman who gathered up the cut grain in a bundle, formed a band by deftly knotting together two lengths of the straw, upon which she placed the bundle, and passed on to the next heap left by her scythesman, to repeat the same process. She was followed

by the "bandster," a man who caught up the two ends of the band which the woman had made, tied them together, and placed the bundle up on end against two others, thus forming a stook, which stood there for several days to dry before being carted into the farmyard and built up into stacks.

The bandster was followed by the "raker"—a loon of about fifteen, who, with a broad horse-belt crossing his left shoulder, dragged a large rake after him, moving round and about the stooks, gathering up the loose stalks into heaps at one side.

From the top of the field to the bottom was called a "bout," and in the middle of the bout the three leaders halted to sharpen their scythes. A fierce rasping noise broke harshly upon the clear atmosphere, mingled with sounds of voices in gossip and laughter; flocks of tewhits (lapwings), their white breasts glittering in the sunlight, swept overhead.

The work began again and continued to the end of the field. There the scythes are

shouldered, and the crowd of workers trudges—leisurely enough to displease the farmer, who is looking on, if he had not been so accustomed to the ways of his folk—back to the top of the bout, to begin again. During this promenade there is plenty of time for courting, story-telling, and now and then a song. The men and women, lads and lasses, take advantage of the opportunity.

The men wear white linen jackets, coloured shirts, corduroy breeches, and straw hats—except one, a distinguished poacher of the district, and he wears a foxy-like fur cap which has a close resemblance to his own reddish hair and whiskers.

The women wear great white or yellow sun-bonnets, which fall over the neck and shoulders, and protrude over the brow, displaying the ruddy, healthy, laughing faces to much advantage; short gowns of brown or red-spotted calico, gray drugget petticoats short enough for a ballet dancer, exposing thick sturdy limbs covered with gray worsted stockings.

The harvesters never halted in their work when they saw the young minister and his wife, although they knew them quite well. But when the two came near, the men gave a hearty "Fine day, sir," and the women, with respectfully averted heads, stared at Teenie sidelong, and took an inventory of everything she had on.

When the couple had passed, the harvesters nodded to each other, made comments and jokes, with some of which neither Walter nor his wife would have been pleased had they overheard, although there was not a word of ill-nature in anything that was said. There was, on the contrary, a very hearty "Wish them weel" on every lip; but the young couple supplied material for conversation and speculation during the course of the next two bouts.

The Laird was quite gracious in his reception; he saluted Teenie in a stately way, and expressed the happiness he felt in seeing her look so well; he hoped she was comfortable in the new house; and if there was anything

he could do to add to her comfort, she had only to mention it.

Teenie felt, as she always did with Dalma-hoy, uncertain whether he was in earnest or making fun of her.

"Everything is very comfortable in the house," she said, with eyes fixed on the carpet, and thoughts wandering back to the last interview she had with the Laird in that room—his warning that she should refuse Walter, and his reference to the Methven fortune. Somehow she wondered, in a faint distant way, whether she had done right or wrong in acting contrary to his advice—"but thank you all the same."

"How funny you should come to-day, and we were just going over to see you!" said Miss Burnett, sailing into the room, her long neck bare as usual.

"You do look nice—I wish I was married!" cried Alice, with her customary ecstasy.

The ladies entered into an animated cross-examination of their sister-in-law, as to the

latest styles of bonnets and dress which she had seen in Edinburgh. They were properly shocked to find that she was lamentably ignorant upon this vital subject. She could not describe one of the countless new bonnets she must have seen in the shops and on the ladies in Princes' Street; she could not give the remotest idea of the colour, material, or—most important of all—the shape and trimmings of a single dress!

“Head and body are all fluffed up behind in a silly way,” was all the description she could give, and the ladies were much disappointed.

Poor Teenie had been too much taken up with her husband, too much interested in the city and the various excursions they made to Craigmillar, Roslin, and other places, to give the slightest heed to the fashions; and now she found that all the historical, biographical, and topographical information she had collected was as nothing compared to the fashion of a bonnet!

She felt humbled in the presence of her

grand sisters, and sorry that she had displayed such complete ignorance of what a lady ought to have known and observed.

“ But I can tell you all about Allan Ramsay and his ‘ Gentle Shepherd,’ ” she cried, making a last effort to rescue her character from the abyss of utter ignorance ; “ I saw his statue and Christopher North’s—that was the great Professor Wilson, and I’m going to read all his books.”

“ Oh, how funny ! ” exclaimed Miss Burnett, somewhat more shortly than usual.

“ Yes, dear, but we’d rather hear about the bonnets,” said Alice again pathetically ; “ now that papa keeps us so close here, we can only see these things once in two or three years, and it would have been so nice to have gone to the flower-show in something fresh from Edinburgh, which is always fresh from London, and that again is fresh from Paris. It would have spited Madam Smith, of Kingshaven, who makes a trip once a year to London, and dictates to everybody all the year round on the strength of it. It would have

been nice to spite her. I wish we had thought of telling you what to look at."

"I wish you had," said Teenie, humbly, and ready to submit to any penance for her stupidity.

Walter and his father were standing in the recess of one of the windows, talking seriously.

"I'm heartily glad you find things answer well so far," the Laird was saying, "and I hope it will continue. I hope it for my own sake as well as yours."

"I have no doubt of it."

"At present, you mean?"

"No, always."

"Just so : we shall not discuss the question : I hope you may be right. All I want is that you should quite understand, as you have made your bed so you must lie on it."

"I am quite content," answered Walter, smiling ; "I accept the future as it may come to me ; and whether it be good or ill, I hope my friends will make allowances for me."

“Don’t fear for them : our friends make many more allowances for us than we give them credit for. If we were pulled up every time we blunder through ignorance, or selfishness, or carelessness, we would be worried into our graves in a year. Do you make allowance for them. I think that is much more needed.”

“Thank you, sir ; I shall not fail in that if they will only show consideration for her.”

“She’ll earn consideration for herself, or I’m mistaken,” said Dalmahoy, looking at Teenie through his glasses as she sat between his two daughters. “You remember what I have told you ; for although my resolution not to help you might break down, that won’t alter the fact that my pockets are empty, my account at the bank blank, and I can’t help you even if I would.”

“I trust you will never be annoyed by any necessity to think of helping us.”

He spoke quietly, but proudly too, proud in the sense of youth, health, and hope, and

in the possession of the rarest treasure a man can call his own—the wife he loved, and who loved him.

They quitted Dalmahoy with all honours. Peter Drysdale was never more respectful than he was to Teenie; he had not smiled for years until she came—she made him think of the grand visions he had entertained when he first saw the “panoramy,” and he declared that she “wasna the least upsetting.”

Alice at the window waved a handkerchief to them as they passed down the avenue; and the Laird, twirling his glasses round his forefinger, vowed that they did not look ill-matched.

CHAPTER VI.

DAME WISHART.



HEY walked on to Craighburn.

As they came near the house both looked anxiously for Grace, but she was not visible. Both had the same impression that there was something unusually quiet about the house. No dog stirred, and no one appeared to welcome them.

"I am afraid Grace is ill," he said, as he rang the bell.

"You think a great deal about Grace," she said, looking straight at him, and with a faint return of the old feeling of spitefulness.

"Yes," he replied, with the clear honest look into her eyes which nothing but perfect honesty on his part, and utter absence of a

suspicion of her feeling, could have permitted ; “she occupies the next place to you, Teenie, in my thoughts. She has always been good and generous to me.”

“More generous than most women would have been, as you know,” he would have added, but he happily checked himself, thinking that the reminder might be unpleasant. He had no idea how unpleasant it would have been. An honest man is very stupid when placed in such a position as Walter’s, and he was stupid and blind, too.

They entered the drawing-room, and presently Grace herself came to them, pale, and eyes sunken. She advanced quickly to Teenie, kissed her, and in a low earnest voice said—

“I am glad to see you back, and looking well.”

There was no mistaking the sincerity of that voice and look, no mistaking the truth of the brave heart that beat within the frail frame of the bonnie, unfortunate woman.

Then she turned to Walter. He kissed

her, too, and Teenie felt no pang of jealousy. Somehow the appearance of Grace, and her manner, had altogether disarmed the incipient viciousness with which she had been disposed to regard her.

“ I was afraid you were ill, Grace,” he said warmly, and holding her hand.

How her heart beat ! how her whole form quivered under his touch, and the kindliness of his words ! What was she not ready to sacrifice, just to be permitted sometimes to touch his hand—sometimes to hear his voice saying a friendly word to her ! Poor Grace, so strong to help others, so powerless to help herself ; she would have sacrificed anything to have an occasional smile from him, if no more than such a smile as he might give to a pet animal. Surely Teenie could not grudge her that !

“ No, I am not ill, but my mother has had a bad turn, and I have been obliged to stay with her day and night. She cannot bear me to be absent from her, sleeping or waking. That is why I have not been over to see you.”

"I thought there was something wrong when you did not come. But I hope aunt will soon be better."

"She is very old," said Grace, wearily, "and she has little chance of being much better in this world."

Standing there, holding his hand, he looking in her face, which had grown haggard during the last few days, she saw that he was quite unconscious of the real cause of her altered appearance. Standing there, holding his hand with one of her own, and taking one of Teenie's in the other, she silently vowed that he never should know the real and deeper cause. She looked at him with a faint despairing smile, and then turned her face towards the wife with such a pitiful expression of inquiry, asking did she understand, that Teenie felt ashamed of the cruel thoughts of which she had been guilty, and wished that she could do something, however slight, to comfort this poor soul, that seemed to be cast out upon the world without any place in which to rest.

Grace saw that she understood, and the fingers tightened upon hers, and the eyes brightened with gratitude—brightened and glowed, and the whole face flushed as if with new health, in the new pleasure which had been given to her.

It was a compact between the two as distinct and well understood as if lawyers had written it out with their disagreeable formality on imperishable parchment—that Walter must never know of her grief. It was a compact as clearly defined between the two as if it had been discussed by a congress of lawyers. Which of them would be the first to forget it?

“Is aunt in bed?” he asked.

“No; I wish she could be persuaded to keep her bed; she would suffer much less pain; but she persists in getting up to her chair, and I have difficulty enough to keep her in the one room. She has attempted to go out several times, but she cannot walk, and I am obliged to watch her closely lest she should fall and hurt herself in one of her efforts to get upon her feet.”

“Why will she not stay in bed?”

The tears glistened in Grace's eyes.

“She has a great dread of death, and fancies that if she were once to yield and lie abed she would die immediately. So she almost lives in her chair. It is often twelve and one o'clock before I can get her to lie down, and then she is awake at the first sign of daylight, insisting upon getting up. When she is very ill she will not go to bed at all, thinking that by keeping to her chair she will escape her enemy.”

“This must be very wearying to you, Grace. You must let Teenie and me relieve you.”

She shook her head.

“My mother will scarcely allow me to be out of the room.”

“We'll go up and propose it to her, at any rate,” he said, decisively.

There was a momentary and inexplicable hesitation on Grace's part, and she glanced at Teenie doubtfully, as if the proposed visit might not be agreeable to her.

"I would like to see your mother," said Teenie quietly. She had never known a mother, and she felt eager to offer help in any way that might relieve Grace.

"Very well, come up, but you must not mind anything she says."

And again she looked pleadingly, as it were, at Teenie.

They went upstairs. Mrs. Wishart was seated in her big chair, her hands falling limply over the sides, her chin sunk upon her breast, a painful spectacle of suffering age fighting stoutly against natural decay.

Walter advanced and kissed her, expressing a hope that she was well.

"That's a good lad. I havena ken'd what a man's mou' was like this long while. I'm not just so spry as I would like to be, but I'll be on my feet again in a day or twa. It was kind of you to come and see an auld body like me. But wha's yon?"

"That's my wife, Teenie."

"Wife, wife!" mumbled the old lady, vacantly.

“Yes, and she has come with me to see if you will let us wait on you sometimes, in order to save Grace.”

“Wife,” continued Dame Wishart, as if she had not heard him, and as if she were making an effort to solve some riddle; “that canna be your wife, Wattie; there’s your wife” (pointing to Grace). “You were paired lang syne, when you were bairns, and it brings Craighburn and Dalmahoy together, just as we would like to see them. Craighburn’s the richest of the two, Wattie, and you may count yoursel’ lucky, for Grace has had a heap of offers, and——”

“You forget, mother,” said Grace, advancing, with much deprecation in the look she gave to Teenie.

“Forget? forget?” exclaimed Mrs. Wishart, startled and distressed, for that was one of the calamities which, next to death, she most dreaded—the loss of memory.

She pressed her gaunt fingers against her

temples, and her feeble eyes wandered vaguely from one face to the other.

“ You forget, mother, that Walter has married Teenie Thorston—a good, bonnie lass.”

“ Wha is she ?”

“ You remember Skipper Thorston ?”

“ Him that saved the folk that were drowning aboard the steamer *Ariel* ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Ah, you see, I mind quite weel what happens, and that was a pickle years syne. But what about him ? What were you saying ? You’re awfu’ ravell’t in your way of telling things, Grace. You should try to be like me.”

“ Well, it’s his daughter Walter has married.”

“ Where are you, Wattie ?” And she groped about for him as if she were in the dark.

“ Here, aunt ” (taking her hand affectionately, although he felt somewhat vexed upon Teenie’s account).

“ It’s no possible that you’ve given Grace

the gae-by? For though I couldna thole to let her away just now, she's a fine bairn, and she'll be a grand wife to him that gets her."

"Grace and I have settled that, aunt," he said awkwardly, and wishing that Teenie might have been spared this dialogue.

"You mean that you have done it?"

"It was done with her consent, and because we thought it best."

"Mother, mother, you are forgetting. I explained it all to you," cried Grace, much disturbed; "and the doctor said you were not to excite yourself on any account."

To the amazement of the others the old woman stood up on her feet, gazing fiercely upon them all. Years seemed to pass away from her as she spoke—

"I do not forget, Grace. I mind that, when you were a bairn, I settled that you should be the means of keeping Dalmahoy in the family. I married in the hope of it, when I saw the waste my daft brother was carrying on. I brought you up in the expectation of it, and I could almost have been content to

die, seeing the wish fulfilled in you and Wattie."

"Whisht, mother, whisht! a stronger will than ours has ordered things as they are."

"I will not whisht, and you had no right to take upon yourself to settle a matter of this kind without speaking to me."

"I did speak to you, but please wait till they are gone, and I'll explain."

"You must have spoken to me when I was asleep, but I'm awake now. Do you ken what you have done, you and Wattie between you? You have murdered the family of Dalmahoy; and here am I, an auld frail woman, just dropping into the grave, and learn at the last minute that what I planned and lived for has gone all agee through your fault."

"I'm sorry, aunt, that I should have disappointed you," said Walter, eager in any way to divert the storm from Grace's head.

Dame Wishart was twenty years younger in her wrath.

"Sorry—you may weel say that! You are

a fool, Wattie, and that poor lassie who has helped to make a fool of you will be sorry for it some day. You have broken up Dalma-hoy, for I tell you, that wild brother of mine hasna a penny to bless himself with ; but, worse than that almost, you have lost the best wife that ever man had. Oh, I understand, auld and doitered as I am. Grace has given in to your nonsense just because she was the most fit to be your true wife. You have been cruel to her, but take my word wi' you—the word of a wife that stands in the grave—you have been far more cruel to yourself. She cared for you, you poor stupid gowk, as never man was cared for by woman. I ken it a', blind and helpless as I look. Awa' wi' you, awa' wi' you—I canna thole you near me !”

She dropped back upon her chair, apparently lifeless. She had spoken with such rapid vehemence that no effort of her daughter could interrupt her, and she was utterly insensible to the agony she caused to the one on whose behalf she spoke. Grace would

have done anything to have spared Teenie such a scene, and so would Walter. He had grown pale, and would, in obedience to the distressed signals of Grace, have forced Teenie from the room. But she imperiously determined to remain and hear all that was said. She was the only one who was quite calm, but her eyes brightened and her cheeks flushed a little as Dame Wishart proceeded. For the first time she seemed to understand all that Walter had given up for her sake.

He advanced hastily to offer assistance in restoring his aunt, but Grace motioned him back.

“She will be worse if she sees you. Don’t stay.—Teenie, remember she is very ill. I’ll be over to see you as soon as I can get out.”

Teenie pressed her hand without speaking, but the big bright eyes were full of pathetic interest and regret.

On the way home, they found conversation difficult—he was vexed by what his aunt had said, because he felt that it would annoy his wife; and she was sorry for it, knowing how

much he would suffer on her account ; but neither had sense enough to speak out the feeling which was uppermost, and so they watched each other wistfully, each wishing that it were possible to say something which would impart comfort to the other, and yet saying nothing.

“ You must not mind what my aunt said,” he remarked with an effort, as they were ascending Drumliemount ; “ she is an old woman, and it is not easy for her to submit to the destruction of any of her cherished schemes. But I did not know until to-day that she had so set her heart upon that match.”

He pretended to laugh, and looked most uncomfortable.

“ Would it have made any difference if you had known it ?” said Teenie, as he opened the gate and she passed through.

“ I’m afraid it wouldn’t,” he answered this time with quite a hearty grin, for he was looking at her, so brave, bright, and bonnie, and at their cosy cottage. Home and beauty,

both his. Was it possible to have decided otherwise than he had done?—"Are you sorry?"

"No," she answered absently, "but I was wondering——"

"Well, what were you wondering, now?"

"I was wondering," she said, halting to pluck a white rose, and to pin it to his coat, "I was wondering if some day you might not remember all that your aunt has said, and maybe blame me."

"It will be you only who will be able to make me remember it, or to regret what I have done. When that day comes, Teenie, we'll be a very miserable couple. We don't look like it just now."

And both laughed, with something approaching gaiety in their tone.

CHAPTER VII.

TRANSITION.



THEY were to settle down now, and apply themselves to the common duties of daily life—she to see that their one domestic swept and dusted the rooms properly (that was easy enough, she thought), and to look after the cooking (she felt some despair in thinking of that); he to read, to write his sermons, and to visit his parishioners.

To him the idea of the simple quiet life he was to lead, in which there was yet the possibility of accomplishing important work, was delightful. The woman he loved as his companion, the work to do to which he was most devoted—what more could man desire or hope for in this world?

His sermon did not progress so rapidly or so satisfactorily as he would have liked. He began to think that he was too happy to get below the surface of his task. The earnest thoughts which he desired to utter somehow lost their strength in being transferred to paper. Then when he had concentrated his whole heart upon some particular passage, the door opened and Teenie would appear, with such a miserable look, to tell him that she had spoiled the broth or burned the pudding and he would be obliged to get up and comfort her.

This was amusing at first, but by-and-by he discovered that æsthetic speculations and the distresses of the kitchen did not harmonize very well ; the one interrupted the other grievously. He began to fidget ; he blamed himself much for the lack of that philosophic calm which sustains the mind in equal poise, no matter what winds are blowing, or what seas are rolling.

He was obliged to preach an old sermon on the first Sabbath after his return. That

was vexatious, for he had intended to deliver a fervent discourse, which, inspired by recent happy experiences, should reach the hearts of his hearers, and help them to accept gratefully life as it was given them, good and ill together. The kirk was full; many were anxious to see the newly-wedded couple, and to note how Teenie would conduct herself in the minister's pew.

Walter felt that he had lost an opportunity; and, to make matters worse, one of the elders recognized the sermon as one he had heard before. He was much scandalized at this backsliding of the young minister, and resolved to take him to task for it at as early a date as possible.

Walter had occasion to call upon this elder. Mr. Pettigrew was in a comparatively large way of business. On one side of his shop he was a grocer, cheesemonger, and licensed to sell wines and spirits, to be drunk off the premises. Very drouthy customers who wished to drink at once, had only to go round to the back, and they were served

with the half-mutchkin, or whatever they might require, through the back-window, outside which they could drink and be merry, whilst Mr. Pettigrew obliged his friends, obeyed the letter of the law, and maintained a clear conscience. On the other side of his shop the elder was a draper, boot-seller, cabinet-maker, and undertaker, not to mention a minor trade in song-books and newspapers.

Mr. Pettigrew was a successful merchant (all the shopkeepers are called merchants). He had brought to perfection the art of attracting customers by presents of sweeties to the children. He was tall, comfortable-looking; had a white fatty face, decorated with short gray whiskers; he had a text ready for every occasion; he was much respected; and he was a martyr to his anxiety about other people's business. Whatever happened in the "town," Mr. Pettigrew was sure to know all about it, and he gave his customers the benefit of his knowledge, pledging each to profound secrecy.

“Step ben this way, minister. I’m proud to see you, sir, and I take it kindly, your coming so soon after you got settled. And how is the mistress?”

He led the way into a little parlour at the back, talking all the time in quite a friendly way—his voice was fatty like his face—and as if that old sermon were not uppermost in his thoughts. He had mentioned the sermon to a dozen customers privately.

He placed glasses and a decanter on the table. Walter declined any refreshment at that time of day.

“Oh, but you maun take something on this your first visit, Mr. Burnett. I canna let you away without taking salt, so to speak, with me,” said Mr. Pettigrew, producing a black bottle with a red seal, then hunting about for a corkscrew, which at length he found.

Then placing the point of the corkscrew upon the cork of the bottle—without breaking the seal, however—he looked at his visitor with the most hospitable expression of which his face was capable, saying—

“You’ll take some of the very best sherry wine, sir? Just say the word, and I will pu’t” (pull it—draw the cork)—“but I *will* pu’t!”

And he made desperate pantomime, as if about to insert the corkscrew. Walter again protested his disinclination to take anything just then, and Mr. Pettigrew became the more vehement as the other became more decisive.

“But I *will* pu’t; the best sherry wine; only say the word, minister, and I *WILL* pu’t.”

The same bottle and the same pantomime had often done Mr. Pettigrew good service, obtaining for him credit for hospitality without expense, for he always insisted that his guest should “say the word.”

“Aweel, since you winna, there’s no more to be said,” observed Mr. Pettigrew, with every appearance of chagrin borne with Christian resignation.

They proceeded to business, which was to discuss the necessity of certain repairs in the church, and a joint movement of minister and

elders upon the heritors to obtain the requisite concessions. They had sundry little disputes about what was necessary and what was not; they agreed upon various points, and their conversation came to a close without the elder having referred to the particular subject in which he was at the moment interested. But as Walter was taking his leave, the elder coughed and said in a considerate tone—

“I hope, Mr. Burnett, you’re no meaning to give us the same sermon ower often—the afternoon one I mean. There is naething to say against it, but we can have ower muckle even of a good sermon; and I take the privilege of age to mention the matter to you.”

Walter’s cheeks burned, for indeed he had a sharp sense that he had not done his duty.

“I thought it better to give you a discourse which had been carefully prepared, than one hurriedly and therefore badly prepared. But you shall not hear it again, Mr. Pettigrew.”

“There’s not a word to say against it, mind, only I thought it my duty to mention it to you.”

“Thank you.”

Apart from this disagreeable reference to the sermon, there was something about the whole interview with the elder which depressed the young minister. There was a coarseness and earthiness in the subjects of their discussion, and the manner of them, which dissatisfied him, chiefly with himself. And so, as time went on, he found that the great work of which he had vaguely dreamed was interrupted and interfered with by the most trivial circumstances—or what seemed to him trivial circumstances. Slowly he became aware that the question of mere existence, the petty problems of the ways and means of bread-and-butter, stood between men and the higher sense of religion—and the bread-and-butter came always first in their thoughts.

He found that his attention was to be distracted by the pettiest of disputes; that he was expected to be the peacemaker often in drunken brawls; and that he was to keep a strict watch upon the manner of the Sabbath

observance. Although these things were urged upon him only by a small section of his congregation, he had not acquired the art of satisfying these bigots, and yet leaving freedom to the others. One poor woman, the small window of whose cottage had been transformed into a shop by filling it with cheap toys, dusty bottles full of lozenges, and tin trays full of treacle-balls and candy, was brought up before the bailie for the offence of selling sweeties on the Sabbath. The woman pleaded use and wont, but she could not deny her guilt, for there was an elder who had himself purchased a pennyworth of candy in order to prove the charge!

The minister made an appeal on behalf of the poor woman—he even dared to excuse her!—and from that day forth a number of his parishioners looked upon him with fear and horror as a man of dangerous, if not altogether heterodox, opinions. He was not sound in the matter of sweeties.

He accepted the position: it was his work to make the best of things as they stood—to

excite the noblest aspirations of those who came under his influence, and to point the way to true faith, which implies courage and hope. That was his work : he would do it.

But after a while there came to him, with painfully slow steps, the knowledge that the trifles of life have more influence upon it than the heroic deeds of action or suffering which may distinguish it. Petty debts accumulated until they assumed proportions which startled and frightened him—all the more so as, despite wild efforts on his part, he could find no way of satisfying or reducing them. Nobody pressed him for money, but the sense of owing it was none the less keen to him. He smarted under it, and he was shamed by it ; soul and mind seemed to be weighted by the vulgar needs of filling the inside and covering the back. How slow he was to recognize the commonplace conditions of existence ! But he did recognize them at length, and he accepted them like the rest, bravely. It was a struggle with him at first, and he felt as if

something of the better part of his nature had been sacrificed in the struggle.

He was disappointed ; yet he clung to the ideal he had formed, feeling the more need to exalt it, and keep it steadily before him, since he found that the grosser elements of nature were so strong in their influence upon our ways.

Teenie was disappointed too, although she did not realize so clearly the source of her disappointment. She found the household worries very trying to her patience and her temper. She was often irritable, and she took an almost wicked satisfaction in provoking her husband, until he would leave the house and take a long fierce walk along the shore to calm himself. She was always sorry, always very penitent, and ready to take all the blame to herself ; but she was also ready to repeat the cruel experiment, forgetting the past. The making-up was very sweet, certainly, but it was costly.

Day by day the old craving for the mysterious something which lay beyond the

horizon line of sea and land came back to her, and slowly grew upon her until it developed into an unspoken discontent with the routine of her life.

She did not say to herself that she was dissatisfied; but she knew that she was impatient, that she did not find pleasure in her household work as she ought to do: and at times she was very angry with herself for that, and for a day or two she would work with an almost savage energy at anything that fell to her hand to do. She would be quieter and blither for a week afterwards, only regretting that there was not enough for her to do.

She was very sorry, and almost cried with vexation, to find that she could not take an interest in her husband's sermons and his books. They had very cosy evenings when they sat chatting together, or maybe playing at cards—chess she could not acquire. But when he read to her she found it difficult to keep awake, and she performed all sorts of pretty manœuvres to conceal her yawns, and to convince him that her eyes were wide

open. At last she would get up, unable to endure the torture longer, put her arms round his neck, make faces at him, pinch his ears, and maybe kiss him, whilst she begged him to put the book away and talk to her.

“I wonder whether it should be regarded as a compliment or not, Teenie,” he said laughing, “that you think I talk better than I read.”

“You read such dry things.”

“I thought this was interesting; but it is wonderful what an effect reading has in contrast with the poorest conversation. I remember once when my father was ill, he could not get sleep: I used to take down Blair’s Sermons and read—and he went off immediately.”

“Try the same plan with me when I’m sleepless,” said Teenie gleefully.

Travels or ballads she would listen to eagerly, and she would lay aside her sewing or knitting that she might give the closer attention. Then her bonnie face would brighten, and her lips part, as she bent for-

ward in growing interest with the progress of the narrative. When he had finished she would sit silent, dreamily realizing the wonders she had heard about.

But as his work became more troublesome—as the necessities of his position pressed closer upon him—he became more and more involved in his tasks. The readings for mere amusement became fewer; his leisure hours shorter; and as she could not find interest in his work, her fits of restlessness became more frequent. She had boundless energy, and as it could not be directed into the common channels of their life, it was rapidly developing into general discontent with herself and everything around her. She flatly refused to take a class in the Sabbath school: in fact because she had a timid fear of her own incapacity; but pride would not allow her to say that. She said that she could not and would not, and when Walter was at length obliged to say that his wife was unable to take a class—it caused him a sharp pain about which he said nothing—there were many unpleasant

looks cast at the minister's wife. That did not help her to any more gracious mood.

When she felt very wicked, as she called her queer humour to herself, she would steal down to the Witch's Bay, take out the small boat, and have a cruise out to sea or round by the rocks. The beautiful colours of the water, glancing under the noonday sun, or flashing brilliant crimson and purple in the sunset, delighted her. The roar of the waves, the plashing against the rocks or lapping against the boat, the foaming crests curling and leaping towards her, were very pleasing to her, and the rolling movement of the boat soothed her. Sometimes Walter would accompany her on these excursions, but more frequently she went alone, unknown even to Ailie, who was now sole mistress at the Norlan' Head, and still Teenie's closest friend. She had no confidante, for she had nothing to confide. She was herself still quite innocent of all knowledge of the dangerous issues to which her restless spirit and vague yearnings were leading her.

Skipper Dan was fitting out a vessel for a whaling expedition. It had come into his head that for Teenie's sake he ought to increase his store, and that combined with his sense of the loneliness of his home, to urge him to carry out the idea which had occurred to him when he had first thought of her going away from the Norlan' Head. The old spirit of adventure seized upon him, and he entered into the work with an enthusiasm which increased daily as he saw the preparations of the "Christina," as he called the ship, nearing completion. The vessel almost took the place in his thoughts which his daughter had occupied before her marriage. Early and late he was near her, admiring her build, her "lines," and everything about her, and filled with joyful pride when any one else expressed similar admiration.

"Is she no bonnie?" he said to a Kingshaven tailor who met him at the harbour, "did you ever see finer lines in any boat that sails the sea?"

The man looked, and then answered cautiously—

“ I canna say, Dan ; she’s no painted yet.”

Dan turned away in silent contempt.

Teenie was often down viewing her namesake. She took the interest of a child—or a lover—in the progress of the ship, and she longed to be a man, that she might have accompanied her father on his expedition. If he would have allowed her, and if her husband had consented, she would have found the utmost satisfaction in going with the “Christina,” and would have delighted in all the hardships and dangers of the voyage. But of course such an idea was not to be entertained for a moment, and she was sorry.

The next best thing to going with the vessel was to be aboard it as often as possible, and she became as well known to the shipwrights and the other men as her father. She found an excellent vent for her surplus energy in seeing to the fitting-up of Dan’s cabin. He scoffed at her arrangements, and at the woman’s luxuries which she insisted

upon introducing ; but it pleased her, and so he submitted, as he had submitted to so many other things.

At length the season had come round ; the “ Christina ” was ready for sea—all her stores and hands complete. She was towed out of harbour, cheered and well-wished by a crowd of fishermen, women, and children, who had gathered on the quay to watch the departure.

Teenie and Walter were on board, intending to return with the steam-tug. Ailie did not go, for she thought it was just as easy parting on dry land as on sea, and “ a heap more comfortable.”

So they moved out across the bar, past the fearful Wrecker, and the “ Christina ” stood out upon a clear course. Then came the parting.

“ The tug leaves us here,” said Dan, as if it were the most ordinary affair in the world.

But when Teenie rested her hands upon his shoulders, and looked into his face so fondly and so frightenedly, so unlike her old

self, Dan felt uncomfortable. Walter and all the men were looking at him.

“ You’ll come back, father ? ”

“ Of course, sea and the Lord permitting.”

“ Ay, but you’ll take care——”

“ Hoots ! do you think I’m a bairn, or that I’m weary o’ life ? I’ll take care, never you heed ; but if it’s the Lord’s will we should go to the bottom, we canna help that.”

He spoke as if she had been finding fault with him unnecessarily or foolishly.

“ I wish I was going with you,” she said laughing, partly in jest, but a great deal more in earnest, as she glanced along the vessel, noted her trim decks, and saw the stalwart seamen, brisk and merry at their posts.

“ See what your guidman would say to that,” retorted the skipper.

“ He would say that he can’t spare her,” said Walter, taking her by the hand to lead her away.

“ I would hope sae,” commented Dan, after giving some directions to his mate. “ Now then awa’ wi’ you ; the boat’s waiting, and

there's a fair wind that we maun tak' our use of. Wish us luck, Teenie, for I'm going to make siller for you, lass, and we'll come home with the Bank o' England in our hold."

"Good-bye, father," she said simply, as she kissed him, and he looked rather ashamed of that natural sign of affection.

"Pleasant times till I come back," he said quietly, then gripping Walter's hand, he added, "Be guid till her."

"Never doubt that."

They went over the side, and on board the tug. They were carried safely into Kingshaven harbour. Teenie was quiet; there was not the least indication of hysteria in her manner. If she had parted with her father for the evening only, sure of meeting him in the morning, she could not have been more calm outwardly.

But her heart was full of strange fears, such as she had never known before. Formerly she had parted with him, even when he had been going on a similar voyage, without the least sense of dread. Now she felt as if

they had parted for the last time, and she seemed to realize a portion at least of the dangers he had to encounter. She became sensible then how rapidly her nature seemed to have changed, and although her husband stood beside her, she felt lonely and weary.

Dan had seemed almost gruff in his parting; but he watched the tug with yearning eyes until it disappeared from sight. He answered the last faint signal which Teenie made with her handkerchief, waving his hat to her. Then all seemed to become blank. His eyes became unaccountably dim, and he turned and cursed the mate heartily for some fancied neglect of his command.

CHAPTER VIII.

B A B Y.



IN the pleasant May-time a baby was born at the manse, and Teenie was very ill. Trees and flowers were brilliant with brown and green buds just bursting into life ; the birds sang a merry woodland chorus, and the sea swept inward with a grand bass sough that told of storm and peril.

At one time she was so ill that the doctor looked grave, and professed himself unable to predict the result. That was a very bad sign, for the doctor was not one who ever doubted his own skill ; he only doubted nature.

Happily, Teenie was unconscious during

the period of her chief danger. She did not know how Walter wandered through the house, and round the house outside, in anguish on her account, and praying for her safety. She did not know how Grace had come over from Craighburn to nurse her ; how she sat by her day and night, ready at the least sign to supply her with soothing drinks, and to calm her delirium with loving words and the gentle touch of a faithful hand.

She did not know what wild things she had been saying—some of them striking Grace very sharply—how she had jumbled together the names of Walter, Dalmahoy, her father, and her nurse ; and how she had uttered in her frenzy the wish she had never clearly realized to herself—that she might be allowed to go away in the “ Christina,” to sail to strange regions, and never come back to stand between Walter and Grace.

This was heard only by the nurse ; and she was careful to keep the door close. She became the more confirmed in her resolution that no one but herself should be permitted to

attend the invalid. She was used to nursing, she was accustomed to spend many nights in a chair by her mother's bedside, and so was the best qualified to take care of Teenie, as she was the most interested in preventing others from hearing the young wife's ravings.

Ailie would have relieved her; but Grace insisted that she had enough to do in taking care of Baby—a fine healthy boy, with lungs of the very strongest quality. Mysie Keith came over expressly, as an experienced nurse, to offer her services. Grace thanked her, and said she would be glad to have her when the delirium had passed off. As for Walter, he was peremptorily excluded from the room, except when Teenie was in a sound sleep. At the first sign of awakening, Grace bundled him out at the door.

One night—fire and lamp burning brightly, Grace sitting with elbow on the table, brow resting on hand, an open book before her which she was not reading, and Teenie sleeping more peacefully than she had done since the birth of Baby—Grace became instinctively

conscious of a change. Her thoughts, sad and far away, seemed to be drawn back by some spiritual influence to the room and the duties she was performing.

She lifted her head, and found the big wondering eyes of Teenie fixed upon her with an expression of puzzled curiosity, and she knew that the crisis was past.

"What's wrong?" said Teenie, as if the whole trouble were associated with somebody else.

Grace was beside her, holding her hand, feeling her pulse, smoothing her brow, and trembling with joy.

"You have not been well, Teenie, and we have been very anxious about you."

"About me? What was the matter?" said the invalid in a faint tone, and laughing feebly at the idea of her having been very ill—she who had never known a day's sickness.

"You have been very ill, and you must not excite yourself in any way. You must obey me for the present, and in the morning you shall see Walter and Baby."

"Baby?" murmured the girl vaguely, and as if seeking to catch some will-o'-the-wisp of thought. Then a dim consciousness of what had passed seemed to dawn upon her; the eyes brightened, and the pale cheeks flushed, as she repeated tenderly and wonderingly the word "Baby!"

"You must not speak again," said Grace with gentle firmness; "I must be very stern with you, I see. Drink this, and do not attempt to move or utter a word, or I shall be very angry."

Teenie obeyed quite humbly. She had not moved her head from the pillow; but Grace felt that, wherever she moved, the big, unnaturally bright eyes followed her with strange questioning looks, noted every turn she made, and speculated what she would do next. In the stillness of the night the consciousness of those eyes became painful to her. She wished that Teenie would go to sleep, or turn her face to the wall; she felt inclined to talk, although it was in direct opposition to the doctor's commands; by-

and-by she felt ready to do anything that would break the charm which those sad questioning eyes wrought upon her, and she had to make a strong effort in order to remain silent.

In a very little while, Teenie, lying there motionless watching her nurse, understood the whole position as well as if she had been conscious all the time. Grace had been nursing her through a dangerous illness—had probably rescued her from death by devoted care—and there she was, quite a helpless, useless creature, apparently doomed always to give trouble and anxiety to those who loved her, whilst she could never find the least opportunity to render them a service in return.

She felt so miserable and worthless ; and she thought that the very best service she could render to everybody would be to remain quiet and die. Then something seemed to whisper “Baby” in her ear, and her pulses quickened with life whilst her eyes filled with tears for which she could not ac-

count at all. Only she knew that she would not like to die.

“ Grace !”

That lady was startled by the low pathetic cry which filled the room ; it was one of the rare occasions upon which Teenie had called her by her Christian name ; generally she avoided naming her altogether.

Grace was kneeling by the bedside, and Teenie looking wistfully into her face.

“ I wonder how you manage it, Grace,” she said faintly.

“ Manage what ?”

“ To forget yourself the way you do—I couldn’t do it. If you had been me, I couldn’t have come to nurse you and save you as you have done to me. I must be awfully bad.”

And she looked helplessly frightened at the sense of her own iniquity.

“ You dear, silly child, you would do a great deal more than ever I have done for anybody you liked.”

“ And you do like me ?”

“Very much.”

“That’s queer.”

Teenie moved her head for the first time, as if the problem required a change of position to be solved.

“Why queer?”

“You don’t know the spiteful way I think of you whiles—just because I know you are so good, and true, and brave. Whiles I wish you were at the other end of the world—or me; then I think it would be better for me to be away, because you would make him so happy and——”

She went no further; her voice, weak at the best, seemed to be stifled with subdued sobs.

“Oh, Teenie, Teenie! why do you speak of this?—you are making me very wretched.”

“I don’t want to do that—for I like you, Grace, I like you a great heap.”

Grace kissed her affectionately—that was the only reply she could make—and then she implored her to be silent.

“You must not speak of these things—you

must not think of them, and you must go to sleep."

"Get Wattie to come and read me one of his sermons if you want me to go to sleep," she said with a faint twinkle of her old humour.

She seemed to be so much better, that Grace for an instant hesitated whether or not she would summon Walter; she knew that he was in his "workshop," trying to read whilst awaiting the report of any change for the worst. But the danger of exciting the patient beyond her strength was too great; and so she took her chair again, pretending to fall asleep, in the hope that Teenie might rest.

Then there was that strange noisy silence that is felt in the night when two people are wide awake, and each trying to keep quiet in order not to disturb the other. The little clock on the mantelpiece made an extraordinary din; the wind seemed to roar round the house, although it was a calm night; a branch of a rose-bush tapped on the window with

irritating loudness and constancy ; even their pulses seemed to be heard.

There was a grand crimson glow on the window, one of the panes glistened with prismatic lights, the lamp and fire faded, and they knew it was morning. It was a grateful relief to both, and each thought that the other had rested comfortably owing to the cunning way she had feigned sleep.

Grace administered the morning dose of medicine, and then she went for Walter. He came in looking weary and haggard enough, but so joyful with the news conveyed to him, that he looked flushed and happy as he embraced his wife.

"What a fright you have given us, Teenie!" he said, husky with pleasure.

"Did I?—I'm awful sorry."

Then the cause of all the trouble—Baby—was introduced : a fat, plump, rosy boy, utterly indifferent to everything and every body. He was placed in the bed beside his mother, and he kicked and squalled lustily.

"He couldna be stronger if he was six

months auld," exclaimed Ailie proudly and admiringly.

"What a funny wee ted!" said the mother, half laughing and half crying.

But when the doctor came he damped the joy of the household, for he found his patient terribly weak; he declared that she had been excited far beyond her strength, and he would not be answerable for the result. If she lived, it would not be due to his skill—and that was the first time Dr. Lumsden had ever made such an admission.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SUNSHINE.



T was a hard fight, but, as Ailie said, she “warstled through wonderful.” Youth and a healthy constitution were good allies ; and so the doctor, who had regarded the case with such gloomy anticipations, was able to take credit to himself for one of the most remarkable rescues in the annals of medicine. Indeed, he wrote to the “Lancet” on the subject, and ceased his subscription to that journal from the date on which his contribution had been declined with thanks.

By-and-by Teenie was able to sit out in the garden, oppressed almost with shawls and cloaks to protect her from the keen breeze.

She would sit looking at Baby being nursed by Ailie or Grace—she was too weak to hold him often herself. He was a perpetual wonder to her : his smiles were glorious ; his howls and kicks were inexpressibly comic.

The state of his mother's health rendered it necessary that Baby should be brought up on "the bottle," and he took to his milk with splendid appetite, showing no interest whatever even in the grave discussion as to what name he should bear.

It was a very grave discussion, renewed many times. Teenie and Grace had consulted endless lists of names at the ends of dictionaries and elsewhere ; numberless grand names were proposed, but objections were found to all, and they came back to the point from which they started, that they must call him after one or both of his grandfathers. But Hugh was not a nice name, and Daniel, with its unavoidable contraction into Dan, was almost ugly. Walter was not bad, but they were desirous of giving precedence to the old people.

"I wish he had been a lassie," said Teenie thoughtfully.

"Why so?" asked her husband.

"Because then it would have been easy enough to settle his name—we would have called him Grace."

"I would have liked that very much," said Grace; "but as he is a boy, we must give him a boy's name."

Finally, it was agreed that he should be baptized Daniel Hugh, although there was a unanimous conviction that it was not a good combination.

Teenie grew stronger as days passed, and she was able to take long drives with Walter in the Dalmahoy gig which was sent over to the manse for her benefit. It was a delight to her to lean back, and stare about her and before her, feeling the pleasant breeze beating upon her cheeks, and inhaling strength at every step the horse made. Walter was beside her, and she was very happy, although she was often dreaming of the great sea—no land visible—waves rolling high, and the

“Christina” tossing upon their foamy crests. Then she would look round the pleasant landscape, and wish that her father were with her.

There was the bright yellow corn, delicately tipped and tinged with green, waving and murmuring under the wind; at intervals there were groups of cots with white or reddish clay-coloured walls, covered with ancient thatch, moss-grown in parts, the rest embrowned by age and weather; or striped with earth-patches where the peasant had been repairing the roof.

Presently they would drive along the bank of a gurgling stream, where a band of boys who had probably raced there from the school were romping about, in well-patched clothes, with bare feet and with breeks—when they had breeks—rolled up to the thigh, whilst they waded in the water: in their hands very primitive rods, made of a branch, a bit of twine, and a bent pin, fishing for minnows. Others were rolling down the bank, in the

simple enjoyment of mere life and freedom from school.

On the other side of the stream was a light green meadow, which had been closely cropped by sheep and cattle; beyond it a rich golden plain of full ripe barley, studded with stooks just cut; this plain was backed by the deep green of a turnip-field, and beyond that was a purple moorland seen through scattered trees of dusky green, fading into a blue-black background of plantation which formed a dark line on the horizon. Overhead, the sky clear pale blue, with fleecy clouds floating lazily eastward, forming into grotesque shapes fringed with bright silver and gold where the sunlight flashed upon them.

She was unspeakably happy in all this sunshine, although she was so weak and helpless. The brightness of the earth seemed to reproach her for certain dark and half-acknowledged wishes that she might be taken away then in order to allow Grace to be happy. The world was very beautiful, and Walter was very kind, and she clung to both with

desperate fondness. No, she could not give them up, although Grace was so good, and must be so miserable.

She was regaining strength rapidly ; every day she felt better and looked better. During this period she became aware of the many signs of kindly interest in her welfare which were made by people whom she did not know, and to whom she had never spoken a word, as well as by those she did know. Friendly inquiries were made for her daily, and little offerings were left at the manse by rich and poor.

“The house is just bock fu’ of jeellies and wines,” exclaimed Ailie. “I dinna ken how they’ll ever manage to get through it all.”

“There’s a great deal more kindness and goodness in the world than we fancy,” Teenie said to her husband one morning, when she began to realize all the stir and anxiety her illness had awakened in the district.

One of the most devoted of Teenie’s friends was Habbie Gowk. Throughout the period of her illness he was at Drumlie-

mount some time in the course of each day, always with a bunch—a “babb,” he called it—of wild flowers; and when he learned that she was up, and able to speak to those about her, the flowers were frequently accompanied by “A Morning Salutation,” in verse of course, written on large blue letter-paper, in a big text-hand.

Walter was rather vexed to discover in the course of these visits that Habbie’s face looked somewhat haggard, his eyes restless, and his clothes unusually tattered. Even Beattie seemed to have grown thin, and to wear a dejected look. The happy spirit of the poet seemed to have vanished; his loud laugh was never heard, and all his pawky ways of pressing the sale of his ballads were forgotten. He was a man oppressed with cares, the weight of which even his donkey felt.

Teenie and Walter were at the door, she seated beneath the roses and honeysuckle, he leaning against the porch. Habbie dis-

mounted at the gate, left Beattie to browse on the roadside, and advanced.

“I am blithe to see you, mistress,” he said, with hearty goodwill, “and I hope it’ll be long or you ever ken such trouble again. You’ll no care for this now.”

He uttered this last sentence a little ruefully as he looked at the wild flowers he carried, and which this time, moved by some curious fancy, he had encircled with a ring of pink and yellow sea-ferns, binding the whole with a broad band of thick brown sea-weed.

“It’s bonnie, Habbie,” she cried, with almost childish pleasure, as she took the “babb” and held it up admiringly, “and it was just uncommon kind of you to think about them. This brings me to the woods and sea. Thank you, Habbie; I feel better and stronger looking at them.”

“I’m glad, mistress, that they please you,” he said, simply.

“But what’s wrong with you, Habbie?” she exclaimed, observing his altered appearance; “have you been poorly too?”

“No, not just poorly, but——”

He stopped, awkward, conscious of the very dilapidated condition of his wardrobe, and ashamed of being there.

“What is it, Habbie?” said Walter, good-naturedly; “you are not the man you used to be. What has happened to you?”

The poet made a wry face, and scratched his touzled head.

“It’s that fortune,” he said, with a faint perception of the ludicrous contrast between his appearance and the cause to which he attributed it. “That—um—that siller Geordie Methven left; it’s put a’thing wrang.”

“How so?”

“I promised not to speak about it, but I winna hold my tongue longer. I wish I had gone to the Laird when he said I might go; but the writer Currie threatened me no to speak to mortal man, or he would drop the case; and so I was feared to speak, and it’s just been a millstone round my neck. It’s waur nor the gaswork yet.”

“ But if you are the heir, as Currie tells you, there should be no need for secrecy of any kind.”

“ I think Currie’s a—beg your pardon, mistress ; I’ll no call any names in your presence ; and I dinna ken that I should mention the matter here of all places, for you are both interested parties.”

Walter and Teenie laughed.

“ Don’t be afraid of us, Habbie,” he said ; “ we have not the least notion of contesting your claim to the fortune.”

“ It’s no that I’m feared about ; I would be glad if it came to you ; but Currie gar’d me sign a paper giving him power to do what he likes, and he’s kept me on waiting and waiting, day after day, expecting that the business would be settled, and I would find myself a man of fortune. But every morning there’s this plea, and that plea, and one delay, and another delay, until I’m clean worried out of my judgment wi’ expectations that come to naething. Yet I canna gi’e up the chance. The craving for the siller seems to ha’e

gripped me, and I can do naething but dream about it, waking and sleeping, and I wish to the Lord I had never heard about it. I can hardly keep from calling him ill names, even in your presence, mistress, when I mind what fine times Beattie and me had afore I ken'd that there was a chance o' my heiring a fortune. It's fair ruination."

He was much excited in telling this story of his troubles, and there was a pathetic sigh in his voice as he lamented the happy days when he had been a contented vagrant.

"You should place the business in the hands of another lawyer, if you think Currie is not acting justly," said Walter, deeply interested.

"Ay, but though, what better would I be? I ken nothing of the business, and the thing has grown upon me in such a way that I'm feared to do anything that might lose a chance; for I canna go back to the time when I never thought about it; I canna be as I was. I feel now as if the siller was really

mine ; and if it's decided that I have no claim till't, it will be just as bad as though they took it out of my pouch. I ken it's laughable that a ragged, guid-for-nothing creature like me should even himsel' to be heir to millions, but it was put in my head, and I canna drive it out."

"But what is the difficulty in your case ?"

"As far as I can make it out, it's just this : My mother was one of the auld wifie Methven's daughters, but I was born in an out-of-the-way place in the Orkneys, and they canna prove that I'm the son of my mother. Whiles I'm tempted to run away from the whole affair, but then I come back, hoping and hoping, and syne I take a dram just to forget myself, or to feel as blithe as though I'd come into the fortune. But I'll no weary you any more. I'll speak to the Laird ; he kens the law, and maybe he can help me. Guid-day, mistress, and I wish you had the siller, though I'm no sure it's a good wish."

“ I’ll speak to my father too, Habbie, and if we can help you we will.”

“ Thank you, sir ; it’s kind o’ you, but I’m doubtful.”

He went away, refusing to have anything to eat (he was not offered anything to drink). He did not go to Dalmahoy that day however. He visited his acquaintances, got a dram here and a dram there, rarely saying a word about his fortune, but feeling his burden lighten with each successive dram. Finally he found himself in the evening seated in a cosy room at the inn, surrounded by a group of fishers, mostly young men, who looked upon him as a kind of butt for their frequently rude mirth, at the same time feeling a vague respect for him as a poet, and as the possible heir to the boundless wealth of the late George Methven. He told stories and sang his songs, his glass was kept well filled, and he was as happy as if he had obtained the fortune, or had never heard of it.

Somehow he reached his lodging, and


during the night he roused his landlady, shouting—

“Tibbie! Tibbie, woman! I’m that dry—fetch in the well!”

His miseries returned to him in the morning.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE SHADE.

“HAT fortune is a shuttlecock,” said Walter, next day, as he was preparing to go out; “everybody seems to have a game with it, and to feel much the worse for the amusement. It was lucky we never had anything to do with it.”

“Yes, it was lucky,” Teenie thought, and at the same time she remembered what Dalmahoy had told her when trying to persuade her not to marry his son. It was curious that Walter seemed to have so entirely forgotten it.

He left her in his room; he had to pay a number of visits to his parishioners, and then he was going on to Dalmahoy. She had to arrange for him some old papers, which were

untidily packed in a deal box he had brought with him from college. She was in a dreamy mood to-day, but the task before her was simple and interesting, for it would help her to realize his life during his student days.

There were old essays which he had written as exercises in his classes, or for the debating society to which he had belonged ; his first attempts at sermon-writing ; scraps of sermons and rough notes suggestive of other sermons ; the letters of old college comrades, and some wild squibs and caricatures written during the contest for the election of the Lord Rector.

They were very amusing sign-posts of the past, and Teenie felt quite merry in going over them. There were many ridiculous things to laugh at, and to tease him about hereafter ; many indications of wild notions which were as unlike the quiet resolute man who was her husband, as if they had been written by another person altogether. What a transformation there was from the youth to the man ! and yet he had always seemed the same to her. She wondered if other people

had noted the change which had escaped her eyes.

There was one more bundle of papers—letters, tied with a thick cord and crushed into a corner. The handwriting was a lady's. She opened the letters with a peculiar feeling of curiosity—a mingling of merry anticipations of something more to tease him about, with a touch of regret that his past had not been all hers.

They were Grace's letters, written to him whilst he was studying in Edinburgh, or during his absence on some excursion in the Highlands.

Although there was a smile on her face, her heart beat fast, and then fluttered feebly as if she were in the dark, conscious of the presence of some undefinable danger. She hesitated to read them; she felt that it would be wrong to do so, and she began slowly to re-tie the bundle.

It was very careless of him not to have destroyed them; most negligent of him to forget that they were in this box when he

asked her to arrange its contents. Perhaps it was not owing to negligence that he had left the letters there, but because he knew that they did not contain anything which she might not see ?

She paused, pondering that question.

The sophistry of the wife's curiosity prevailed. She untied the bundle of letters again and read them. One by one the letters were taken out of the envelopes, read, and replaced.

She did not think of the pain Grace would have suffered, had it become known to her that those letters had fallen into other hands than Walter's ; but she did think that he had been cruel in not destroying them. Or was it possible that he could have been so blind and dull, that he had not felt the yearning woman's heart throbbing in every word and every line ? Here was the revelation of a love so strong that under its grand halo nothing he could do seemed wrong ; so self-forgetful that Teenie partly understood now how Grace could love him and yet surrender him to another.

The foibles which he confessed in his letters to Grace were treated with tender partiality ; the little tokens of success which he was able to announce were hailed and magnified with loving enthusiasm ; the few conventional words of affection which he wrote were received with eager gratitude. How utterly submissive to his pleasure was this woman ; how grand he must have appeared in her eyes ; and how cruelly unconscious he must have been to it all !

Teenie felt that her love was very poor indeed compared to that of Grace ; yet he was her husband, and Grace still loved him, and was able to care for his wife.

She could not understand it at all : she thought there was a mistake somewhere. She was not given to tears, but she bowed her head over that sad record of a disappointed affection, and cried bitterly—not for herself. There was no jealousy, no angry feeling in her heart now ; there was nothing but piteous regret that she had marred the happiness of one who deserved it so much better than she

did. Why, why was it that one so good and generous as Grace was, should have to suffer, whilst she, a weak useless creature, should have her wishes granted?

She asked the question almost fiercely; and then she felt afraid—felt that she had done something unpardonably wicked, and, sobbing, wished that she had never been born, since she was the cause of sorrow when she wished most to give joy.

What agony Grace must have endured; and how bravely she had concealed it!

Teenie dried her eyes, irritated with herself for such weakness, and then, very tenderly, tied up those old letters. Holding the bundle in her hand, dazed with strange thoughts and self-accusations, and her heart aching, she tried to think what she could do to relieve Grace. Nothing, absolutely nothing; she must just sit still with the knowledge of all the sorrow entailed upon one whose life was blameless, without even the privilege of telling her that she shared her pain.

She replaced the letters in the box, and turned away from them. Since she could do nothing she would try to forget them : but she could not.

Walter found his wife looking much paler than she had done when he went out in the forenoon, and she was much weaker too.

"You have been wearying yourself," he said anxiously, and fearful of a relapse ; "you should not have overtaxed your strength. What a stupid fellow I am, to have allowed you to attempt anything just now !"

He poured out her medicine, and tried to make her more comfortable in the chair. He moved about rapidly, performing all those little affectionate offices which relieve an invalid.

Her big dreamy eyes followed his every movement, with a strange eager look in which there was much sadness. She noted that, although he was trying to hide it from her, there were signs of agitation on his face and in his manner. Had he remembered about

the letters, and was he vexed to think that she had seen them ?

When he had done everything he could think of to relieve her, and stood by the chair anxiously watching her, she looked up at him with a quiet smile.

“I’m better now, Wattie; I’m always better when you are beside me,” she said; “I’m getting strong fast—but what is the matter with you?”

He was disturbed by the question, and looked grave as he took her hand, patting it gently with his own.

“I suppose it’s better to tell you at once than allow you to worry yourself wondering what it can be. My father is in serious difficulties, and——”

He stopped, for the words he had been about to utter—“he blames me”—would have vexed her. So he said quietly—

“And I do not see how to help him.”

“But what are the difficulties?”

“Money—money—and money,” he answered, trying to speak lightly.

“Is that all?”

He smiled at the question, and was thankful she had so little experience of that terrible condition, the want of money, whether it be little or much.

“Yes, that is all.”

“Then we can help him—my father will do it for us.”

Her face brightened, and she felt almost glad of this calamity which enabled her to be of some use. But Walter shook his head, as if her hopes were quite vain.

“Your father will not be home in time, and if he should be, I do not think he could advance the sum required—seven thousand pounds.”

“Eh!” cried Teenie, in despair; if he had said seven millions she would not have been more startled. She only knew that he had mentioned a sum too large for her wildest fancies to realize.

“How could the Laird make away with such a heap of money?”

“He says it made away with itself. At

any rate the money was borrowed on the security of Dalmahoy, house and grounds, and it was spent. The Laird was not much afraid of being unable to repay the money when called upon, and was sure that at the worst he could renew the loan; for Mrs. Dunlop, from whom he borrowed, was one of his oldest friends. But several projects upon which he had counted have failed; Mrs. Dunlop is dead, and her heir has just served my father with a terrible document called a 'Schedule of Intimation and Protest,' the effect of which is that, if the bond is not paid off three months hence, Dalmahoy will be sold."

There was a sort of grim satisfaction in talking thus calmly about a matter which was racking his heart with pain—a matter which meant the utter ruin of his family.

"And your father—your sisters—what will they do?"

"Who can tell?" he said, so quietly, but with a pale look which filled Teenie with dread. He was gazing down dreamily at the

box of old papers, and his thoughts wandered back to the happy student days when the future seemed so clear, and his energies seemed great enough to overcome any difficulty life could present. He went on: "They cannot work, and I have no home to offer them. Droll, is it not?—there is that Methven fortune, which might make so many people happy, uselessly multiplying itself whilst a whole crowd of heirs are wrangling over it and making themselves wretched about it; and here are we, who might be saved from misery, if we could only obtain a fraction of it. I shall learn many wise lessons from that fortune, if I can only escape the mania of craving to possess it. At present I am sorely tempted to desire it for my father's sake."

He spoke in much the same tone and manner as if he were reviewing a mathematical problem, or looking curiously at some psychological puzzle. He had not the least craving for the Methven estate; although he saw how much trouble a very small portion of it would

have spared him, yet it was no more than an interesting subject for reflection to him. He was deeply distressed on his father's account; and he had been sharply reminded that the present crisis was entirely due to his obstinacy in marrying Teenie; if he had only fulfilled his engagement with Grace—"an engagement," said the Laird, "which your sense of honour as a gentleman should have compelled you to keep, no matter what she was willing to agree to—there would have been no trouble now. There would have been plenty of means to clear Dalmahoy, and to save it from that scamp who is a mere gambler on the Exchange of Glasgow, and who is either hard pressed for money himself, or thinks this a good opportunity to set up as a landed proprietor."

"However," said the Laird finally, in his grand magnanimous way, "I've eaten my cake, and I am content; but then I have eaten your share as well as my own, and that's awkward—for you."

His frankness and generosity were beautiful.

These things running through Walter's head, he was still unconscious of any regret that he had acted as he had done, although he could not avoid acute suffering in the knowledge that the course he had found it necessary to pursue should entail sorrow upon others. He questioned himself, had he not acted selfishly? Then he looked at Teenie and simply answered the question—he could not help it.

At the same time he stooped down to the box of old papers; he turned them over tenderly, and presently he came to the bundle of Grace's letters. He took it up with a glow of sweet and sad remembrance on his countenance.

"Poor Grace!" he said, handling the letters fondly; "she was very kind to me; I wish I could show her what an exalted place she has in my thoughts."

He was unconscious that Teenie was watching him, and that her eyes were very wide and bright.

CHAPTER XI.

TEENIE'S DOUBTS.



HERE was a sharp pain in Teenie's heart, and wild thoughts performing a confused dance in her brain, as she watched him handling those letters.

He was thinking about Grace evidently, and maybe he was lamenting the folly which had tempted him to marry one so useless and helpless as she was to him. She saw him in despair from which he might have been saved, if she had only been brave enough to refuse to be his wife. She saw him in sore need of help, and she was so poor—so weak that, with all her love, she could not say or do anything that might relieve him in the least degree.

Like a sudden and dense mist upon the

mountain, the thought fell upon her—blinding her, stupefying her so that she did not know which way to move towards safety—that he must be sorry for having married her. It seemed as if there were a great load within her breast, bearing the once strong and upright form down to the floor.

Shading her eyes with one hand, she asked in a very low voice—

“Has the Laird no friend who will lend him the money?”

Without looking up, and his thoughts far away in the old days—how far back they seemed!—of gay youth, bright dreams, and impatient hopes, he answered—

“Our only hope is that Dame Wishart may advance it; but if she refuses, I am afraid the sale will take place.”

He drew a long breath, and she saw that his lips were compressed as if he were in pain.

There was a curious sense of silence in the place; even the wind outside seemed to pause, and the rustle of the honeysuckle against the window was not heard.

The only hope was in Dame Wishart—Grace's mother. If he had married Grace, there would have been no difficulty about this business; it could all have been settled quite easily, and he would have been happy. So, in her morbid broodings, she began to see how cruel she had been, how wisely the Laird had spoken, and how wickedly and selfishly she had acted. Her love was bringing to him fast the ruin and misery of which Dalmahoy had warned her. She had turned away from the warning, because he had pleaded and she loved him so, and now——

He *must* be bitterly repenting the foolish passion which had tempted him to marry her in spite of reason.

That pretty fairy story, in which she had lived for a little while, had changed into a very dull and prosaic reality. She was surrounded by struggles and difficulties which she had never known at home; she shuddered with a cold fear that she had done wrong—that she had involved him in the wrong, and that both were now doomed to

pay the penalty of the error for which she alone was to blame.

In a painful, dreamy way, she seemed to be conscious that he was fighting with a wild sea—that he was calling to her for help, and that, although quite near, she could not lift a hand to save him. The anguish to her was intense—it was like a nightmare which she tried to shake off and could not; yet every circumstance of their position, and everything around her, was coldly distinct and sharply defined to her senses. She saw and felt everything with the supernatural vividness with which the mind is gifted in moments of great peril.

How vexed he must feel with her now. By-and-by he would come to hate her as the cause of all his misfortunes, and poor Baby would become a trouble and an annoyance to him. If she could have foreseen—if she could have known or suspected what suffering he was to undergo on her account—she might have prevented it all, and that was the bitterest thought of the many which afflicted

her. She might have prevented it all, and she would have been so glad to do so—only to save him the least pain, and, lo, she was the cause of all his pain !

Still in her dreamy state, she wished that she could have dropped into the cobble and sailed away out upon the strange seas, no matter whither, so that she never came back to Rowanden any more—so that she might leave him free to marry Grace, and to be happy, as he would be with her. She had a pitiful weary feeling of being all alone in the world—of being so much the enemy of those whom she loved, that they must wish her to be away ; and for their sakes she desired nothing better than to be taken off at once, and hidden out of sight, no matter where.

As her brain throbbed with these sad fancies, a big sob burst from her, and Walter started up amazed and distressed ; it was a very unusual sound to proceed from her.

“What is the matter, Teenie, my own bonnie wifie—what has happened to you ?”

He placed his arm round her so tenderly,

and drew her to his breast with such affectionate warmth, that but for the extravagant fancies which possessed her, she must have known how much she had wronged his thoughts. She was grateful for the touch of his hand—grateful for the loving sound of his voice; and at the same time she experienced a twinge of pain, that he should lavish all this care upon her who had brought him so much sorrow.

“There’s nothing wrong with me,” she said stubbornly, and even with a degree of petulance in her fierce determination to overcome every sign of weakness. Then, sobbing in spite of herself, and wistfully, “It’s an awful pity.”

Her pity was for him in having married her, and so entailed upon himself all this suffering; he attributed it to the position of his father.

“It is a pity, and it will upset the old man terribly—to be turned out of his home, to be set adrift in the world, and to begin life anew when he is so near its close—oh! it vexes

me so that I do not know what to say or think."

"But you could not help it"—timidly, and half against her will, craving for some balm for the self-accusations which were torturing her.

"No, I could not help it; and yet, Teenie, I feel as if there were some blame due to me, and the feeling makes me smart keenly. I ought to have been able to relieve him in this crisis. Perhaps I should have been if I had followed his advice, and applied myself to engineering. That is a profitable business, once you get into the groove; but preaching is a poor trade at the best—there are no fortunes made at it. Still, I do not feel that my choice has been a wrong one; I have adopted a poor trade according to the ordinary measure of success, but have I not chosen the one in which the real measure of success is largest and most substantial? It is surely a vulgar thought to measure God's love by worldly prosperity; and if that were to be the rule, it would be a sore temptation

to ignorant minds to try to cheat themselves and Providence. They try it often enough as it is. I am content to be poor even when I must look on such sorrow as my father's, if I may help men to realize what is true happiness."

"If I could only help you!" she muttered, to herself rather than to him.

He looked at her, puzzled and much grieved by her white face. Still, he had no conception of the vein of thought she had fallen into, and of the cruel confirmation which his words gave to the convictions that distressed her. He smiled sadly, and tried to comfort her.

"Get well, Teenie—look happy and bright as you used to do, and then I think it will be possible even to hear the tap of the auctioneer's stick at Dalmahoy without despair. But if you go on being so unlike yourself as you are just now, I don't know how I shall stand it."

"Ay!" she cried with a wild sort of bitterness of heart—shutting her eyes and thinking

of the blunders they had made—"there would have been no need for all this fash if you had only married Gr——"

He placed his hand tenderly on her mouth, a quick and painful suspicion of her feelings running through his mind, and filling him with more acute sorrow than even the knowledge of his father's distress had done; for he saw how much his careless words must have pained her, and he felt that she had not the unquestioning faith in him which he had hoped she possessed. It was a double shock to him, and very bitter.

"You are my wife," he said quietly, "and you must not think that it was possible for me to marry anybody but you, as indeed it was not, and could not be, even if I were free to make choice again to-morrow with the knowledge of all these troubles staring me in the face. I would act just as I have done, unless perhaps I had hesitated in the fear that you were not willing to share poverty and sorrow with me."

"Oh, Wattie! I would be proud of your

poverty, because it brings you so much nearer to me. But when I see you suffering, and so many others suffering, because——” She hesitated, and then impetuously, “because you have married me, I feel wild!”

He was startled by this passionate outcry, and strangely disturbed.

“You are all the world to me, Teenie,” he said softly; “you can never guess half the happiness you have given to me, and I can never forget it, I hope.”

She was looking at the floor, her face clouded by unpleasant emotions, but it was an unspeakable relief to hear his words and to mark his tone. The doubts which afflicted her were quieted, although not dispelled. She did not speak again.

From that day there was a marked change in her manner and ways. The frank, fearless girl of old times was gone, and her place was occupied by a quiet, somewhat shy, and often sad woman, whose nature was occasionally roused by under-currents of passion, which, however, found no further expression than in

the quick flash of the bright eyes—like the sea at night illumed for a minute by lightning, then dark and incomprehensible again.

Out of her very love there was a slow growth of fierce despair. She looked often across the sea, yearning towards it, thinking of her father, and speculating upon what might have happened if she had gone away with him before the marriage. Dalmahoy would have been saved, the Laird would not have despised her as he must do now, and Walter and Grace would have been so happy! Grace would have suited him so admirably; she was interested in all his work, and she would have helped him in it; he could have discussed his sermons with her; she would have taken charge of the Sunday School, and she would have managed the soup-kitchen and the coal-fund in winter. Teenie blamed herself that she was utterly unfitted for any of these duties—at least in the way they were usually performed.

There was always in her mind the self-upbraiding cry, never a thought of blame to

others. Yet at times she looked and acted as if she were angry with everybody, just because she felt so bitter towards herself. Wild, wicked feelings surged in her breast, and they were all the more fierce because she tried so hard to conceal and suppress them.

She watched her husband with a sharp aching at her heart, and wistful eyes. As she saw the shadow of trouble deepen on his face, her despair was quickened until it seemed as if all the world were against her, and that every hope of peace was gone from their home. And she was the cause—she alone was the cause! She felt that her whole nature was changing, that her brow was becoming contracted with a constant frown, and that her heart was swelling so with pain, it must surely burst very soon.

Yet she was pitifully submissive to him, watching his every look, studying his every wish, and trying with all her might to make up to him, by her affectionate care, for the ruin which she fancied was the dowry she had brought to him. How she prayed and

prayed that her father might return in time to rescue Dalmahoy! She would have him give up the last farthing he possessed for that purpose; and then if she could only disappear from the place—die perhaps—she would be satisfied.

To Grace she was more gentle, more loving than she had ever been before. Everything Grace said was as gospel to Teenie; everything Grace did she praised and admired—and it requires a good heart to be pleased with the successes of one's friends. The conviction that she had stepped into the Dalmahoy family as a sort of marplot grew upon her, until it became a sort of waking nightmare. The poor girl's heart was breaking, and her only relief was found in exceeding tenderness of thought towards those whom she fancied she had wronged; whilst often she was in appearance dour to them, and quite unsympathetic. These were the moments in which she hated herself most, in which she was longing most to discover some great sacrifice to make by which she

could help them, and show how much she loved them.

When alone with baby—the little thing laughing, crowing, and kicking in the animal enjoyment of mere existence—she felt the bitterness of her position most keenly. But even when alone she rarely allowed the tears which filled her breast to find vent. She was either dour in her anguish, and would sit for hours watching the little one, and dreaming sad dreams, or she would be fierce in her affectionate hugging of the child, and, as with dry hot eyes she looked at him, would try to croon some of the old sad ballads, or to tell him pretty stories of gay lives, as if he could understand, and as if her heart were not bursting with pain.

CHAPTER XII.

FALSE STEPS.



EENIE'S white face haunted Walter; it became a terror to him, and added cruelly to the anxieties which at the time engaged his thoughts. He feared that she was very ill, and spoke to the doctor. Lumsden, in his rough and hearty way, assured him there was nothing serious the matter now; it was only the natural effects of the birth of the baby, and she was not half so bad as many women were under the same circumstances. He prescribed cheerful conversation, good feeding, and as much open-air exercise as possible—driving best.

Obedient to these directions, Walter tried to be cheerful. It was a very ghastly result,

for he was in sore trouble. He knew that he made a bad show of mirth, and he was much vexed by it. But he did the next best thing as he thought—he said never a word about the various matters which were annoying and worrying him so that he could with difficulty get up even the faint appearance of cheerfulness with which he attended her. He was very earnest in the effort, but he was very grave all the same, and in spite of himself; for his father's prospective ruin, and various irritating petty inconveniences in his own affairs, were pressing sharply upon him. Unfortunately, he was not one of those who could take life lightly; life was a very serious business to him, and its responsibilities not to be shirked or postponed on account of any personal sorrows or weaknesses.

She was not in the least deceived by his pretences at indifference to the way things were going. She questioned him, and he told her that all would be right by-and-by; that she was not to trouble herself, but just devote her whole attention to getting well,

and that would make him quite happy, for his chief distress was due to the fact that she was so ill. And to a certain extent he spoke absolute truth.

But she looked upon this as another sign that she was unfit to be his wife ; she regarded it as a final proof that he thought so ; and at every fresh attempt he made to hide his sorrow from her, she kept murmuring to herself—

“ He feels that I am the cause of all this wreck and ruin, and he will not tell me. He sees that it is my fault he is in difficulty, and he is trying to shut his own eyes to it by hiding it from me ? ”

So the very means which he adopted to assist her recovery retarded it. If she had only spoken out, then he would have understood, and he would have explained everything to her ; or if he had only spoken out she would have understood, she would have been spared much pain, and she would have helped him by getting well, and also by the sturdy spirit in

which she could take in hand those matters which were plain to her.

But each trying most earnestly to help the other, each loving the other most devoutly, and each striving hard to save the other from pain, did exactly what they wished not to do—inspired doubt and grief.

There was no foolishness on either side ; each was capable of very bold and resolute action as soon as the course was visible. It was just one of those commonplace positions in which what we wish to do blinds us to what we ought to do.

He was deeply grieved that she showed no signs of improving health ; she was bitterly vexed with him that he did not think her worthy of his confidence—just at the time when it would have been the greatest conceivable relief to him to have poured into her ear the whole history of his vexations, when her sympathy would have helped and strengthened him beyond measure, and when the loss of it was the greatest of all deprivations !

He tried to interest her in the events which were passing around them, but he found it difficult to get her out of the house. She had grown almost a hermit, and she could not bear to pass the garden gate. He thought that a very bad sign, and he tried all sorts of little persuasions to induce her to go down to the village, to Kingshaven, or for a drive to the hills. She yielded, but it was only because she wished to please him; she seemed to derive neither pleasure nor benefit from these excursions.

In her present humour the number of petty aggravations which she discovered increased rapidly; the beauty of home was fading, and by-and-by it would wither. Already the pitifully small beginnings of misunderstanding, of doubt, which, if unchecked at first, develop into fierce words and distrust, had entered the house; and yet each was striving honestly to be faithful, dutiful, and loving to the other.

It was at the flower-show that Teenie encountered the Laird for the first time after

she had heard of the calamity which loomed before him.

The flower-show was in the school-house. There were tables with rising shelves along the walls and down the centre of the room, brilliant with flowers—chiefly the old-fashioned ones : verbenas, petunias, hollyhocks, roses, pansies, and two or three ruddy cockscombs. These for the most part, were nurtured in cottage gardens by hard-working weavers, shoemakers, and farm labourers. The gardeners of the gentlemen in the neighbourhood contributed the rare flowers which their masters' hothouses produced.

The dominie, the doctor, the exciseman, and a goodly number of the ladies and gentlemen who lived on the outskirts of the town—spinsters and widows of limited income, half-pay officers and retired tradesmen—were also amongst the exhibitors, and as eager as any of the others in the contest for the prizes. The show was a great event of the year ; it was the climax of much devoted labour and many anxious hopes. It was the

cause of many heart-burnings, for the flower-growers identified themselves with their favourites, and failure to win a prize—or at least special commendation—was regarded as a deep affliction ; by some accepted contentedly and wisely, with the determination to make a more strenuous effort next year, guided by the experience of this one ; by others with a spiteful grudge towards those who had succeeded ; and by others again with self-satisfied feelings of contempt for the ignorance or partiality of the judges—who were generally gardeners from distant gentlemen's seats, and nurserymen of the neighbouring towns.

For months previous to the event, the dominie was in a state of excitement, arranging the list of prizes, settling with the committee and the judges for the most convenient day for the show, and writing letters about everything to everybody. The labours of a Secretary of State were small in comparison with the dominie's, and still smaller if viewed through his notion of their relative importance to the country.

Then he had his special anxiety about his own roses and pansies, for which he had obtained several prizes, and to which he was as much devoted as if they had been living things. At four o'clock in the morning he was in his garden, busy with his pets ; there again after school until late in the evening, sometimes even working by lamp-light. To make the show "a grand display," to win a prize, and to be complimented for his "indefatigable exertions on behalf of horticultural science," constituted to him the glory of life.

The day came, and it was exceeding beautiful to him : the clear sunshine, with the cooling breeze from the sea ; the warm moist atmosphere of the room, gorgeous in colours—pink, red, purple, blue, green, and the innumerable shades of these—with the sweet odour of the roses. "Paradise must be a flower-show," thought the dominie, meaning anything but disrespect to Paradise.

The ladies—flowers in their way, and quite as gorgeous in attire, although not so

perfect, perhaps—and the gentlemen streamed into the room; passed slowly round, admiring, simpering, coquetting, and making comments of more or less or no value.

“The colours are so very fine,” exclaimed Mrs. Dubbieside; “they are almost equal to the artificial!”

McGilchrist, the manufacturer, observed that if he could only obtain a dye equal to the dominie’s prize pansy—a deep velvety purple—he would make a fortune by it. Others were able to admire the perfection of cultivated nature without any commercial speculations; but a large proportion of the visitors came because it was a show where other people were to be seen, and passed round and round, blind to the beauty which was laid before them.

It was in this room Teenie met the Laird. For an instant she had a desire to avoid him; then with a momentary frown and a sharp mental reprimand—“Why should I?”—she walked up to him and held out her hand.

The eyes of all the people near were upon them ; for there had been curious rumours going about—rumours not yet fully developed, but promising a fine crop of absurd falsehoods at no very distant date.

He was perfectly aware that they were observed ; and the Laird, on the brink of ruin, was as grandly courteous as ever, and smiled as gaily as if he knew no care in the world.

He took her hand, greeting his daughter-in-law as respectfully as if she had been the richest lady in the land.

“ I am glad to see you looking so well, Christina. I have been hearing bad accounts of your health, and it is a charming surprise to see you here to-day with a colour on your cheeks that rivals the dominie’s roses.”

The compliment was disagreeable to her, for the colour was due to her anxiety as to how he would receive her ; and she thought his tone drier than usual.

But the onlookers were satisfied that the Laird was most considerate, and that there

was no breach between him and the minister's wife. The Laird was slyly conscious, and he determined to give the good folk still further satisfaction.

He drew Teenie's arm within his own—much to her astonishment—and walked slowly round the room with her, directing her attention to the choicest flowers, and making pleasant or patronizing comments upon the growers of the plants he praised. He never paused, never hesitated for a word, or for a sentiment, because he had such sublime faith in himself that he never doubted what ever words came uppermost were worth uttering.

It did not matter to her what he said, for she was busy thinking how kind he was to forget or to forgive so readily her share in bringing about his present unfortunate position.

He was vastly admired by the onlookers, his condescension, his courtesy, and flow of language were much praised; and several ladies vowed that he was the handsomest and youngest old gentleman they had ever seen.

The Laird was sensible of the admiration he excited, and for the time he was really indifferent to his impending ruin.

When they had passed round the room and reached the door—where the dominie muttered his thanks for Dalmahoy's presence on that occasion, and the Laird replied with a neat compliment about the dominie's management in general and his flowers in particular—he did not leave her as she expected.

“Wattie is busy with some of his elders—arranging about the Sacrament, I dare say—so I'll walk down the road with you till we meet Drysdale with the gig,” he said.

They walked along the high road on the edge of the cliffs, the sea glancing and surging below them. Her head was bent, her eyes fixed on the ground; he still retained her arm, discoursed upon the beauties of nature—the flower-show—or inquired about the baby; and she replied in monosyllables, her breast swelling with other thoughts.

Suddenly she lifted her head, and looked him straight in the face.

“ You were right, Laird, and I was wrong,” she said decisively.

Even he was slightly taken aback by this frank admission, for he was quick, and he had a fair idea of what she referred to.

“ My dear child, I do not understand you, and you look as if the matter were serious.”

“ I mean about the marriage—I should not have taken him, as you said, especially when he was expecting a fortune which I knew he could never have. You were right, and you must hate me—although you try to be so kindly.”

The Laird had a disagreeable remembrance of his fib, and he spoke all the more earnestly.

“ It is a principle of mine, Christina, never to cry over spilled milk. I would have been glad if you had followed my advice when I offered it to you ; but you and Wattie have thought otherwise and acted otherwise ; there is no more to be said. We must make the best we can of matters as they stand.”

“ But I have not got the education to fit

me for his wife—you know it—you knew—why didn't you hold him back?"

In his surprise at this attack, the Laird found himself trying to reconcile her to her position.

"You can still learn, my dear child. Education develops, it does not create. It seems to me clearer daily, that we are what we are by the force of nature, and not by education. Education refines, modifies, improves natural faculties, and renders us more or less useful, or more or less harmful to society. That is all. Education will never shorten the ears of a donkey."

"And it will never shorten mine."

"I did not mean that, Christina," he said, hastily, shocked by the construction she had placed on his words.

"I know. What are you to do about this money you require?"

Dalmahoy was surprised to find himself put out of countenance by this child. Clearing his throat, and not quite so calmly as usual—

"Walter has told you, then?"

“ Everything.”

“ Well, we are going to my sister—there is Wattie coming for me—and I expect her to remove the difficulty.”

“ And she will not do it—I know, from what she said to me.”

This was spoken with a dogged conviction which startled him.

“ I hope you are mistaken, Christina,” he said, very sincerely ; “ if not, you will soon see the auctioneer at Dalmahoy, and me a beggar.”

“ And it is my fault,” she muttered bitterly, as Drysdale came up with the gig.

CHAPTER XIII.

WANT OF MONEY.



EENIE walked home. The Laird and his son entered the gig, and drove over to Craighburn.

They were received by Grace, who looked somewhat uncomfortable : the cause—she had not been able to learn what her mother intended to do ; but she smiled all the same, and gave her friends a hearty welcome.

Dame Wishart was in her chair, looking much brisker than usual, and evidently prepared for visitors. She had on a new cap of somewhat gaudy colours ; she wore a brocaded gown which had belonged to her mother, and which was never used except on state occasions ! it was a piece of family grandeur, and had passed through several generations. Her

face was keener and her eyes brighter than they had been for a long time. She seemed, indeed, to be nerved up to some great effort.

Both Dalmahoy and Walter expressed the pleasure they really felt in seeing her look so well; but the former experienced an uncomfortable doubt that all these preparations indicated the fulfilment of Teenie's prophecy.

Grace stood behind her mother's chair, ready to supply any of her wants. She looked with a curiously anxious gaze from her mother to the two men seated before her.

Dame Wishart sharply interrupted the Laird's commonplaces about her looks and the weather.

"It's siller you want, Hugh. What's the sum?"

"You are abrupt enough, sister, to make one go away without saying a word about it."

"You may, if you like."

But the Laird did not like, especially as he could not help himself otherwise.

"I wish to explain to you——"

"What's the sum?" she interrupted.

“If you would only listen one moment, you would understand the whole position.”

“What’s the sum?” she repeated.

“I would tell you if you would allow me to explain——”

“What’s the sum, and no fraising about it?”

“Very well, since you will have it that way,” said the Laird, feeling himself altogether at a disadvantage, and not relishing the position, more particularly when it was his sister who spoke to him; “the sum is seven thousand, with a few hundreds for interest.”

“You can renew if you like.”

“No.”

“What for?”

“Because the bond has fallen into the hands of a dissolute rascal, who wants the money.”

The Laird was sometimes very severe upon spendthrifts, and could preach beautifully on the subject.

“You can borrow elsewhere.”

“Not without paying a Jew’s interest, that

would bring me to the same pass as the present, and worse, in a twelvemonth."

"So you came to me as your only chance?"

"Yes."

"Seven—say eight thousand. It's a heap of siller," she said meditatively.

"Yes, but the property is worth twice that," observed Dalmahoy, beginning to feel himself again; "and if I can only find minerals, as I am almost sure of doing on Brunton's farm, why, there is no saying what wealth is in store for us."

"Ay," she replied dryly, "but you've been seeking the minerals a long while, and you have not found them. You want eight thousand. Very well."

There was a long pause, during which the Laird eyed his sister eagerly, and she sat staring at her lap, nervously moving her fingers, and apparently considering the proposal. She put out her hand, drawing Grace towards her; then, with a curious twinkle in her faded eyes, she thrust her daughter towards Walter.

“There,” she said, with a kind of vicious pleasure, “marry them, and you shall ha’e three times what you need.”

“Oh, mother !” cried Grace, bursting into tears.

Walter rose, pale and agitated, taking Grace’s hand tenderly in his own.

“Hush, Grace ; she forgets.”

The Laird became white, then red with chagrin. He got up, and with much dignity put back his chair as if in preparation to leave.

“I am sorry your mind is so weak, sister” (he knew that he was hitting her on the most sensitive part), “that you forget Wattie is already married. However, I see that you are resolved not to help me over this ditch, and so there is no more to be said.”

“You’re wrong, Hugh,” answered the dame, in a dry hard voice. “Stupid as I am whiles, I have not forgotten that you have broken our paction, and that Wattie has wedded a useless thing from Rowanden—a fisherman’s lass ! I have not forgotten that you, between you, have made my daughter miserable !

Make her happy as she was, and all that I have is yours; but you have broken her heart, and you come to me for help. Fie on you, Hugh!—and fie on you, Wattie! You should have begged your bread rather than come here for the siller you would not take when it was offered to you, with the life of the best lass that ever drew breath. No, man; no, I do not forget. I mind well.”

“Mother, mother, mother!” cried Grace in bitter shame, dropping on her knees and hiding her face on the dame’s lap.

With a frightened look the mother bent over her child, and she seemed to become slowly conscious that in upbraiding her brother and Walter she was most cruelly wounding Grace. The furrows on her face were drawn closer, and deepened with pain; her bony hands played nervously with Grace’s hair, the while her eyes seemed to darken with fury.

“Whisht you, my lamb,” she muttered in a quavering voice; “I did not mean to hurt you. Whisht you, now. I have forgotten

you too often, and I did it again to-day. But I'm growing old, Gracie, and I dare say it's just as well, or better, that you are not taken from me, for I could not live long without you. I ken what you are, and that's what makes me wroth wi' these fools, that could pass you by, though it's the better for me—it's the better for me. Whisht you, now, and I'll not say another word—the stupid gomerils, that could shut their een to such a jewel. Ah! they have little notion of what they have lost, but I ken, I ken—the idiots they are—but whisht you, my bonnie lamb ; you'll soon forget."

Alternately trying to coax her daughter into resignation, and uttering angry reproaches against her brother and Walter, the old lady seemed to forget the presence of the gentlemen.

To them the position was humiliating in the extreme. The Laird was indignant, yet conscious of having behaved ill, and assumed a coolness which he did not feel. Walter heartily sympathized with his aunt, and with

her half-doiterated expressions of love for her daughter, notwithstanding the harshness with which she judged his conduct.

“Will you let me speak to your mother alone, Grace?” he said, stooping down and placing his arm round her to assist her to rise.

How the touch thrilled her! She got up immediately, and except that her eyes were red, and the face pale, there was no sign of the recent outburst of grief. She was calm and thoughtful as usual, and quietly set about arranging the cushion at her mother’s back.

“You can say what you wish to say before me, Walter,” she said softly, “and my mother will understand you the more readily when I am beside her.”

Walter hesitated, for he was going to speak about Teenie; but he had such faith in whatever Grace advised that he obeyed.

The Laird stood swinging his glasses, looking as if he had no greater interest than that of simple curiosity in the proceedings.

Dame Wishart’s face had become dull; her thoughts were wandering away to other days,

and to hopes indirectly associated with the present circumstances ; but she seemed already to have forgotten the scene which had just taken place.

She sat staring at the place where her daughter had knelt, and muttering to herself words which were unintelligible to the listeners.

Walter laid his hand gently on hers.

“ I wish to speak to you, aunt. Will you listen ? ”

“ What is it about—not the siller ? ”

“ No, we do not wish to ask you for that now. What I have to say is about Grace and myself.”

Her face cleared again, and her wandering faculties seemed to be concentrated upon her nephew's words.

“ Say away.”

“ I want you, aunt, to understand that my father is in no way to blame for the breach of the engagement you and he made for Grace and myself. The fault is entirely mine——”

"And mine, mother," interrupted Grace. "I refused to have him when I knew that he thought better of Teenie Thorston."

"But I might have held my tongue, Grace," he said sadly.

"And I would have found out the truth when it was too late to mend matters," she replied firmly. "No, Walter, it is best as it is, if my poor mother could only see it as we do."

"Choot!" cried the dame angrily. "I see it better than you do. You don't think I'm blind or doited, do you? I tell you, Wattie, you ought to have spoken to me as well as to Grace. But now that you've had your fling, see if you can pay the piper. I will not."

It was apparently useless to make any attempt to explain to her that she was, or seemed to be, incapable of understanding anything at the time when Walter spoke to Grace.

"I only wish you to relieve my father of any blame," said Walter earnestly. "Blame

me for it all, and try to think kindly of my wife."

"I'll not think of her at all. I dare say she's good enough for you—but you shall not have the siller.

She reiterated that resolution as if she found a pleasure in the mere sound.

"At least you will understand, aunt, that in what I have done I was trying to do what I believed to be right, and therefore best."

"I understand nothing but that you have broken the bargain made between your father and me, and that you have made her unhappy—though she's a fool for her pains."

Grace, now quite calm, touched her mother's arm hastily, and with something like a flush of pride—

"I tell you, mother, Walter acted as I wished him to do, and you vex me and pain him when you say that he has made me unhappy."

Dame Wishart turned sharply upon her daughter.

“Do you think you can cheat me? Have I not seen how poorly you were, though you would not say it? Have I not seen you in the weary nights when you thought I was sleeping?—but I’m not aye sleeping when my eyes are shut. Have I not seen you greeting to yourself, glowering at nothing, and trying to make believe that you were reading the paper or a book? I’ve seen it all; I know how wae and weary is your heart, and it’s his fault.—Look at her, Wattie, look at the bonnie white face, and the colour that’s on it enow because I’m telling truth. Look at her—has your wife such a face as that?—she cannot have such a heart. You have cast all that away; but look at her and you’ll ken why I’m bitter against you, and bitter against your father, and why you shall not have the siller.”

“Will nothing make you spare me, mother, if you will not spare them?” Grace cried again, confused, pained, and vexed.

“Choots! you’re but a bairn.”

To Walter, his aunt’s words afforded a

bitter revelation. He seemed to awaken as from a pleasant sleep to the full knowledge that he was guilty of a terrible crime. It was only at this moment that he really understood the sacrifice Grace had made for him. Blinded by his own selfish love for Teenie, and with a stupidity partly due to his want of that vanity which induces some men to fancy every woman who speaks kindly is in love with them, he had accepted literally her declaration that she would be content in seeing him married to the woman he loved. Still blind and stupid, he had regarded her friendship for Teenie, the frank and devoted services she rendered her, as guarantees that she was satisfied, and that whatever disappointment she might have felt at first had been completely forgotten. Now he learned that she was still suffering, and he could partly imagine what she must have suffered on his account.

All his senses were quickened by the pain of this discovery; he remembered so many things he had done and said which must have been

torture to her—he looked back upon so many trifles which must have wounded her acutely—that he marvelled at her submission and at her generous concealment of it all, whilst, for himself, he could not have felt more humble or more afflicted had he been found guilty of murder. And it was a kind of murder that he had perpetrated—he had murdered her youth and doomed her to long years of sorrow.

If he had only awakened sooner! But the wrong was done and could never be requited.

He could not speak ; he only gazed at her with such sad, regretful eyes, that Grace could not bear to meet them. She would have given worlds if she could have foreseen what her mother had intended to say at this meeting, so that she might have prevented Walter from being present.

The awkward pause was broken by the Laird, who without the least evidence of vexation or disappointment in his manner, advanced to his sister.

“ Good-bye—come over to Dalmahoy if you can some time between this and the next three or four months, for about the end of that period the sale will probably take place, and I shall no longer be able to offer you hospitality there. May I make a suggestion? I would advise you to tell your man of business to buy the property for you ; it is worth all that is likely to be offered for it, and in that way you might still keep it in the family, as it were.”

“ And let you sit rent-free,” said the dame dryly.

The Laird made a deprecatory movement with his glasses.

“ Upon my word you are too suspicious ; I give you a useful hint, and you instantly charge me with doing so for my own profit. Well, perhaps it is natural for you who have money to suspect one who has none—especially when that one is your brother. Will you allow me to come and dine with you occasionally, when I can find no other table than yours ? I shall keep out of the way of

your friends if possible ; and I shall try not to borrow half-crowns. You will find me the most discreet of poor relations—indeed I would go into the poor's-house at once, but that my being there might be somewhat discreditable to you."

"You know whose fault it is," she muttered, gazing at him vaguely as if her mind were wandering in search of his meaning.

"Undoubtedly, no one has a better right to know than I have," he went on ; but he was not so successful this time in concealing the bitterness he felt under his assumed air of jaunty sarcasm. "Some men in my position would endeavour to excuse themselves—I don't. Some men would blame their luck—I don't. Some men would be disposed to blame you, sister, for refusing me this temporary assistance which would save the property—but I don't. You are quite right, there is no excuse for poverty—unless it may be the ability to endure it with fortitude. I shall endeavour to display that commendable talent."

“ It’ll be the first talent you ever displayed, Hugh.”

The Laird put on his glasses and looked at her.

“ You are remarkably well to-day, Sarah. I congratulate you ; may your present health continue long. Good-bye.”

As he pressed her hand, there was a painful twitching of the dame’s features, as if some relenting thoughts were passing through her mind which she could not or would not utter.

The Laird paid no heed ; he took his leave in the same friendly manner as if the interview had not determined the ruin of Dalmahoy.

Walter, bending over her and pressing her hand, whispered—

“ Try to forgive me, aunt ; I did not know the harm I was doing.”

Full of pain, and full of regret for the trouble he had brought upon Grace, upon the dame, and his father, he was loyal in every thought to his wife. The position was

extremely awkward. To have saved his father's property he would not have married Grace, for in his eyes that would have been the blackest injustice ; but to have spared her pain he would have fulfilled the engagement from which she had released him, and he would have tried to forget Teenie. As matters stood now he could only regret his blindness, and hope that Grace felt less than her mother imagined.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE GLOAMING.



RACE followed the Laird downstairs. She saw how the placid face became rapidly scored with wrinkles ; how the jaws fell, the head and shoulders stooped as if under a heavy burthen.

“ Uncle, you must have some wine before you go,” she said, drawing him into the parlour.

“ Dear me ! you’re there, Grace,” he exclaimed, instantly straightening his back and trying to assume the customary expression of calm self-complacency. But he saw her pitying look, he knew that she had observed him, and head and shoulders drooped again as he said faintly, “ Yes, child, I’ll take

some wine—I require something to stimulate me just now, for I feel ridiculously weak.”

He took a glass of sherry and drank it hastily, which was quite unusual with the Laird, who liked to sip and relish every drop of his wine. He filled his glass again, and was more patient with it; but his nerves were evidently much shaken.

“You’ll not think too hardly of my mother, uncle,” she pleaded softly; “she is in a strange mood to-day; but she will do what you want by-and-by.”

The Laird shook his head and tried to smile, but failed.

“I shall not think hardly of her, my child, because she is doing just what I would have done myself, and I think she is quite right. Wattie is a fool, and I am no better to have yielded to him; but——”

He took some more wine instead of finishing the sentence; he was thinking of the blunder those confounded lawyers had caused him to make about the Methven estate.

"She will give you the money before you require it," repeated Grace.

"There is not the least likelihood of that; she is in one of her stubborn moods for which our family is famous, and once 'No' is said, 'No' it remains, however much we may become convinced that it ought to be 'Yes.' But I would not care for myself, or for the boys—they can manage—but what is to become of the girls, Heaven knows. They are helpless creatures, and can neither toil nor spin—maybe on that account, like the lilies of the field, they will have the fine raiment which is their chief concern; but the lilies have a certain beauty which recommends them to the eyes of men, and I can't say as much for my daughters."

With that wicked joke he finished his wine and walked out to the hall. There Walter was waiting, and there Pate instantly joined his mistress, rubbing his nose against her dress and seeking the recognition which was at present denied him.

The servant was holding the door open, the

groom was holding the horse, and so Walter had no opportunity to speak to Grace, of which she was very glad.

“Will you drive down to the gate, sir? and I will join you there,” said Walter, as his father stepped into the gig.

Dalmahoy drove slowly down the avenue. Walter took Grace’s shrinking hand; without a word spoken she knew what he meant, and, although her heart trembled at the idea of speaking to him alone just after the trial upstairs, she felt afraid of doing anything that might appear strange in the eyes of the servant Mary, who was still holding the door open. She could not explain to him there; his pale face and sad eyes pleaded, and because Mary was looking on, she yielded.

But she yielded hurriedly, as if she were anxious to get breath, and without hat or shawl she walked out with him. Mary was a dull lass; but she knew something of the relation in which the cousins had formerly stood to each other, and she could not help

observing the flurried manner of her mistress.

There was a footpath leading down to the gate through the narrow belt of wood on one side of the avenue, from which it was entirely screened by a high trim hedge: a soft moss-grown path, in which there was a perpetual twilight, cool even when the sun was hottest. Now in the gloaming, when the trees were tipped with the golden radiance of the western sky, and the windows of the house were aflame, the path lay in deep shadow, crossed at intervals by bars of silver light.

They proceeded down this path. Grace had withdrawn her hand; but she walked close beside him, her eyes searching the ground as if seeking there some explanation of the nervous, uneasy feeling which possessed her. She attributed it to the exposure her mother had made of the secret which she had guarded so well, as she thought, and most anxiously from him.

His face wore the blank expression of one

who has heard some terrible news and has not yet had time to realize it. They walked on silently and slowly, she now and then glancing sideways at him, wondering what he wanted to say, half divining and wholly wishing that she could have escaped from him without adding to the pain which her mother had caused.

The Laird walked the horse through the gateway, and drew up. His head was bowed again, and he sat for several minutes, unconscious that there was somebody standing by the step of the gig, softly calling to him. A touch on the knee roused him.

“Bless my soul, Christina! how did you come here? You startled me from profound cogitations,” he exclaimed, head and shoulders erect instantly. “Why didn’t you come with us?”

“I did not mean to come,” she answered in short awkward sentences. “I was going home; but I was anxious—about the money. What does she say?”

Without replying, he looked at her searchingly.

“What’s the matter with you?—you’re like a ghost.”

And in the gray gloaming, in her light dress, and with the bonnie face so white and anxious, the Laird was quite justified in the comparison he made.

“What does she say?” repeated Teenie stubbornly.

“Oh, just an old woman’s say—a little spiteful, and a little wrong-headed; nothing more. Are you going up to the house? or will you jump in, and Walter can either walk back or get up behind.”

He was not disposed to answer her question just then; indeed, he was anxious to cheat himself into the belief that Dame Wishart would change her mind. Teenie understood him.

“Where is Walter?” was all she said.

“You’ll meet him coming down the avenue.”

She passed in at the gate. The Laird

gazed after her, then drew breath, relieved. He was glad to be alone.

She strained her eyes through the shadows of the trees to catch the first glimpse of her husband. It never occurred to her to question why he had remained behind. There was a bend in the road ; she would see him as soon as he reached that. She went on, now hurriedly, and again with heavy steps and hesitating. She did not wish to go up to the house ; and yet she was half inclined to go, for she wished to see Grace. Dalmahoy was not inclined to tell her the result of the interview ; she knew what it would be, but she wanted confirmation, and to know why the boon was refused. Walter might refuse to tell all in his desire to spare her, and she could not insist if she saw that it vexed him. She could cross-examine Grace, who was the spirit of truth, and would confess everything. But Teenie had a shrinking dislike to go to the house, remembering how bitterly the dame had spoken on her last visit.

She reached the bend—still no sign of him.

Presently she heard voices, low and earnest : Grace and Walter : they were on the other side of the hedge.

Teenie called, but was not heard. She looked for some gap, through which to reach them. There was none ; the hedge, close, thick, and high, presented an impregnable barrier, right and left, as far as the eye could reach in that dim, melancholy light.

The voices were farther down towards the gate. She followed, and called again—still unheard. Then words—fragments of sentences—struck her ears, and chilled her. She could not hear all—only scraps now and then, and she was left to fill up the blanks for herself.

She walked on side by side with the speakers, hands clutching at her cloak, lips tightly closed, and making no further effort to let them know she was there.

The cooing of the stock-dove, the loud song of many birds, the chatter of rooks, the distant sound of voices — “Gee-up,”

“Wo-ben ;” a shepherd’s whistle or shout to his dog, and a faint rumble of wheels ; these were the sounds which filled the air.

Walter turned to his companion with that sad earnest face which he had shown often of late ; but he was trying to smile at present.

“ Now that we are here, Grace, and alone, I scarcely know how to speak to you ; for it seems like impertinence on my part to accept literally all that your mother said ; and yet there was something in it which made me fear—no ; it made me *feel* that I had done a great wrong to one I love. Yes—love is the word, for I do love you, Grace ; and in saying it, I am neither in word nor heart disloyal to Teenie. She knows it, and she loves you too. But I wish—ay, very fervently wish—that I could believe your mother might have been deceived as to your thoughts about me.”

How the poor girl’s heart shook, and her limbs threatened to fail her ! But she understood her ground now, and she took his arm with the frank confidence of a sister.

“Thank you, Walter ; I should be sorry if you doubted that my regard for you was less than yours for me. I am unchanged ; but you must remember what an invalid my dear mother is. She had one fixed idea—the union of Craighburn and Dalmahoy. It has clung to her through all her wandering fancies, and she cannot understand how it should be possible that—that——”

She stammered ; and he, with much bitter self-reproach, filled up the pause.

“That I should be so cruel to you, and so base—so miserably selfish as to accept from you the sacrifice of an arrangement which was dear to you on her account, if not on your own.”

(“I am unchanged,” Teenie heard, and understood better than her husband ; then from him, “So cruel to you so base.” These words bewildered and then angered her.)

Grace pressed his arm, and looked up at him with a forced gaiety,

“Come, sir, you must not be too vain ; you

must recollect that you are a minister, and married."

"It is because I recollect both that I feel so wretched."

(Teenie heard that, and misconstrued it.)

Grace trembled again with vague terrors ; she thought of Teenie, and felt that there was something very guilty in this interchange of sentiment, although both were perfectly honest in thought and word. She determined it should be the last interview of the kind they should have. But the old intense love for this man held her firmly, and she could not run away from him, as she felt ought to be her immediate action.

"You frighten me when you speak that way.—Let us part now. Good-bye."

She looked at his face ; it was cold and hard, with the expression of a man who, conscious of guilt, is resolved to meet the inevitable consequences.

"Not yet," he said hurriedly ; "you are not to go yet. I want to try to understand our position ; I want you to forgive me."

“For what?”—as if she did not understand!

He turned his eyes full upon her, and she shrank under their gaze. The position was to him so serious, that even the most kindly attempt to gloss it over, or escape it, was disagreeable.

“I wish to see the worst, Grace,” he said quietly, and as if she had not spoken; “will you help me?”

She turned away her head. How could she help him to see what she had striven so hard to conceal?

“If I can,” she said with quivering lips.

“Tell me then”—he was trying to speak calmly—“if we had it all to do over again, with the knowledge we now possess would you have me act in the same way as I have done?”

“Yes.” She found the word difficult to utter, but she did utter it, steadfastly.

“You do not blame me, then?”

“No.”

She could say that firmly, and without difficulty ; she loved him too much to blame him.

“ God bless you, Grace, for that assurance ; although I know it is your brave, good heart that speaks, and not your reason. I blame myself so much, that it is a relief to feel that you wish to believe me innocent. I did try to do what was best ; I felt bound to go to you when I understood my own feelings, and to tell you ; I was ready and willing at the least word from you to try to forget Teenie. You would not speak that word. I was selfish, and forgot that you were too generous to speak it—forgot that, in a lower nature than yours, mere pride would have prevented it being spoken. I was blind, I see now, and know that I should have been silent, to spare you pain.”

“ And then Teenie would have suffered. You did right to speak ; your silence would have been the cruellest wrong to me. Trust me, Walter, I shall be quite happy when I see you so.”

He pressed her hand gratefully as he answered—

“ Good, generous, brave as ever ! But my happiness now, Grace, depends on yours.”

(Teenie’s hand sprang up to her breast, as if she felt a sudden pang there. She wished they were at the gate ; hurried forward a few steps, then paused, and again kept pace with the others.)

She could look at him steadily now ; she could even smile frankly at his morbid sensitiveness, so loving was she.

“ You must not praise me too much, Walter, or I shall think you are making fun of me. Now let us look at the position practically. An arrangement was made for us—neither you nor I had a say in it, although we were willing to implement it, as the lawyers say. Well, you discovered that one desirable element of the bargain was wanting, and you sensibly told me—you were bound to tell me—and that made it better for both of us. We broke up the agreement. Suppose a man sold me a horse as sound in wind and limb ;

upon going to the stable he found the horse had been down meanwhile, and spoiled its knees. Would you call him an honest man if he did not tell me of the misfortune? and wouldn't you think I was quite justified in saying I didn't want a horse with broken knees? It's the same case exactly, I won't have a husband with broken knees any more than a horse."

"If you are satisfied, that is all I care to know," he answered, smiling.

"Very well, then; we'll make another bargain, this time for ourselves: we shall never return to this subject, and we shall say nothing about our gossip to Teenie—it would only annoy her to no purpose."

"I will do whatever you wish, Grace."

He unlatched the little gate which opened to the avenue; she passed through, he followed, and both were somewhat startled to find themselves face to face with Teenie.

CHAPTER XV.

CONQUERED.



HERE was a nervous timidity in Teenie's manner, as if she would have liked to escape them. But that passed immediately, and although there was a slight degree of reserve in her expression, it was attributable to the confusion and pain which she was trying to hide.

The three figures stood in the deepening gloaming, the trees casting mysterious shadows on their faces. Walter, with one hand resting on the gate, his eyes fixed on Teenie ; Grace, holding up her skirt with one hand, the fingers of the other twirling a sprig of hawthorn ; Teenie, looking downward, fingers playing with the buttons of her cloak,

like a child who had been detected stealing jam.

The pause was only for an instant, but the three were conscious of it, and felt that somehow it made a difference amongst them.

With the impetuosity of the child seeking to defend herself she spoke.

"I could not wait till Walter came home—the Laird told me I would meet him in the avenue—I heard you speaking—I called, but you did not hear me—and so I just followed the sound till we came here."

"We were both deaf, Teenie, for we were trying to bury some old vexations, and to get the better of some new ones," said Grace, smiling frankly.

"And you have walked all the way—Teenie, Teenie, you will be laying yourself up again," exclaimed Walter, earnest, fond, unconscious of any doubt which might have been inspired by what she had heard—the best proof of his sincerity—and placing his arm round her as if to support her.

"Come away up to the house and rest a

little," said Grace; "you must not go back without having tea, and we can have a nice chat. Then I'll drive you home."

"No, thank you, Grace; the Laird is there—I would rather go back with him. Will you come over to-morrow? I want to speak to you."

It was a very sweet pleading face that she raised, so unlike the bright brave visage of the girl that Grace was rendered uneasy by it.

"Certainly, Teenie, as soon as I can get away I shall be with you."

"Good-bye, then; don't forget—I can't speak just now."

Teenie kissed her, which was such an unusual action on her part that Grace was more and more amazed, and began to experience vague feelings of alarm. There was such pleading tenderness in Teenie's manner, so much like that of an affectionate nature suddenly roused to a sense of guilt, and eager to make reparation for the offence, that Grace wondered and was silent.

Teenie hurried out to the gig, hiding her

face. The Laird was roused from a reverie, straightened himself, descended and offered his assistance to his daughter-in-law. But she sprang into her place before he was well on the ground.

“Upon my honour, Christina, I think you could dance on the tight-rope,” exclaimed the Laird, following her with much less agility than he generally displayed.

Walter, after seeing that the apron was hooked, and that his wife was properly wrapped up, took his place behind. Grace was standing at the gate. Good-bye, and they were off, she watching them till they crossed the burn, and then, in much perplexity of mind, walked slowly back to the house.

Teenie, with head bowed, as if to shield her face from the wind—which was keen, in spite of the heat of the day—sat in a dull, weary mood. Her eyes felt hot and aching, as if she had been sitting up all night, or as if she had been crying for several hours. They were dry and parched. She could not concentrate her mind upon anything; her

thoughts were quite disconnected, jumping from the free childish times to the day on which Ailie had brought home the book of fate, and Walter had told her his story—she wished he had not told her the story : she would have been happier—then away to the far northern seas, to the whales, and her father ; back again to the Laird, and the now inevitable ruin of Dalmahoy. She could not see anything before or around her, and the uncertain shades of the gloaming were already black as night to her eyes. Walter spoke to her several times, but she did not hear.

The Laird made one or two courteous attempts to entertain her, but finding that she was quite indifferent, he, for once in his life, cheerfully subsided into silence.

They formed a dull party ; the horse, a fine high-stepping chestnut, was the only one that displayed life and action, and at a good trot he carried his sad companions rapidly over the ground.

A junction of two roads, the one leading to

Dalmahoy, the other towards Rowanden and Drumliemount.

"You'll come up and have dinner with us," said the Laird, and drove on without waiting for an answer.

Teenie was anxious to get home for Baby's sake, but she did not like to oppose the Laird in his least wish at present, and so she yielded without a word.

Drysdale's face was longer than ever as he received his master and guests at the door. Dinner had been kept waiting more than an hour, and that was enough to disturb the best-intentioned butler.

"Everything will be fusionless as a burnt haddock without sauce," he grumbled, as if it were an entirely personal affliction.

"In a quarter of an hour," said Dalmahoy, and passed upstairs.

"It's just like him," muttered Drysdale, still more afflicted, "he has nae consideration for the soup or the fish either."

The Laird was thinking of a time, near at hand, when he would have neither soup nor fish.

“How is your new tenant of the fishing?” said Walter, hanging up his hat.

“Oh, he’s well enough—but is he as rich as they say, Master Walter?”

“I believe so—hundreds of thousands a year from some business in London.”

“Poor fellow, and wi’ a’ his wealth he canna land a salmon-trout! I saw him with a fine one yesterday, and he ruggit at it as though he wanted to get the hook out of its mouth, instead of landing the fish. And he did that, he got the hook out, and the fish gaed awa’, flippin’ its tail, and just laughing at him. Poor fellow, wi’ a’ his wealth!”

Feeling intense pity for the unfortunate merchant—and some contempt too—Drysdale went off to see about the dinner.

When he appeared in the drawing-room the Laird was quite spruce, and as gay as the most youthful gallant. He took Teenie down to dinner; Walter, his eldest sister; Alice going alone, but making believe that she was leaning on the arm of the most entertaining cavalier, conversing in confidential tones with

herself, playfully covering her mouth with a pretty lace handkerchief, as if she were concealing her laughter at wonderful witticisms, and occasionally glancing at her sister, as who should say, "Don't you envy me?"

Dalmahoy had never been so brilliant as on this evening. He told his old stories with new relish, until even Drysdale grinned behind a dish-cover, although he was well seasoned to all his master's jokes, and had the least natural inclination to laughter of any man. He discoursed upon life in general, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number in particular, as if he had nothing to think about but the furtherance of that principle. He was perfectly in earnest, for when a man plays much with a sentiment there always comes to be an element of truth in it to him—the result of habit, if not of conviction.

Miss Burnett and Alice were astounded by the sprightliness of their father, although they were still ignorant of the impending calamity; Walter, who knew how affairs stood, was

puzzled ; and Teenie wondered how he could be so merry with such sorrow sitting on his hearth.

The ladies retired ; the Laird forestalled his son, and bowed them out with an old-fashioned courtesy, and a pretty compliment for each as she passed.

He returned to his place, thrust aside the stiff-backed chair upon which he had been sitting, and drew an easy one up to the table, like a man who makes up his mind for thorough self-indulgence.

“ Push about the jorum, Wattie ; that’s the claret—fine stuff ; we have a few dozen left ; pity I can’t make you a present of it ; but mind you scrape every farthing together, and buy it at the sale. I’ll never forgive you if you let it pass ; and when you’ve got it, I’ll help you to drink it.”

The wine stuck in Walter’s throat ; he could drink no more.

“ The more fool you,” exclaimed Dalma-hoy, sipping from his glass with exquisite relish ; “ you’ll not have the same chance

often. 'Pon my soul, the prospect of the sale adds fifty per cent. to my enjoyment of the wine. Here's luck to the buyers."

"Have you really made up your mind to part with everything?"

The Laird crossed his hands, twirled his thumbs, and with an air of resignation—

"I am spared that trouble; you and your aunt have arranged it between you. So there is no more to be said, and there is nothing left but to take the utmost enjoyment out of everything while I can still, in a manner, call it mine."

Walter moved uncomfortably on his chair.

"Be quiet; drink and enjoy yourself, or ring for coffee, and go upstairs. I insist upon not being disturbed; and I shall take my nap here this evening."

Walter did ring for coffee, drank his with nervous haste, and went upstairs.

The Laird left his cup standing beside him until it grew cold, and continued to sip his claret. But when his son had left him, the expression of indifference slowly passed

from his face, and was replaced by one of dull despondency. He gazed at the comforts which surrounded him; he was to leave all these. He was to walk out of the home of his fathers, which was dearer to him than he had ever fancied until now. The sentiment of association or reverence for the past was strong upon him, and he felt that it would be a hard thing to part from all these old friends—even the chairs and tables were old friends in his present mood. He felt very old—very much broken down, and inclined to bitter thought about his sister and his son.

He forgot his wine, although his fingers encircled the glass; he forgot his nap, and the announcement he had made that he was to take it there (it was his custom to have his nap in the drawing-room whilst one of his daughters read the "Times" to him, then to waken up and read for himself when they had gone to bed); he forgot that Drysdale would be fretting about not being permitted to clear

the table, and his head dropped forward, his eyes fixed stolidly on the claret jug.

A hand touched him on the shoulder, and he looked up heavily ; but instantly he made an effort to resume his jaunty air, and to rise, when he saw it was Teenie who had roused him. But her hand was like that of a strong man—or he was very weak—and she would not allow him to rise.

“ I stole away from them upstairs, and came down to you,” she said, in a half-stifled voice ; “ I knew you would be thinking and—oh, Laird, my heart is breaking, for it’s all my fault !”

She swung round, dropping on her knees before him, her bonnie face covered with her hands.

“ My dear child, you talk—you talk nonsense,” he stammered, patting her head, and smoothing the rich yellow hair, which made him think of the gold he could not obtain.

She looked up, her eyes bright with tears, and the pallor of her face reproaching him for his feeble attempt to deceive her.

“ You will have to let the place be sold ? ”

“ I am afraid so. ”

There was something disagreeable sticking in his throat, which rendered his voice husky.

“ You will have to go away from this—your home—your father’s home. Where will you go to ? what will you do ? ”

His flimsy disguise, although pretty well maintained up to this point, fell from him, and he broke down.

“ God knows, ” he sobbed, hiding his face, ashamed of his misery. “ The girls have no wit, and their hands have never been trained to anything ; I am an old man, even more helpless than they are. ”

She was maddened by the sight of his grief ; her arms were round his neck, her head resting on his shoulder, and she too was sobbing.

“ Will you ever be able to forgive me ? ”

He embraced her affectionately.

“ I do now, my child, heartily, ” he said with a sincerity which could not be misunderstood ; “ I was inclined to blame you, Christina, for if you had not been in the way—well,

there, we'll say no more about that. But you have taught me to love you just when I might have disliked you most. God bless you, my child ; it has done me good to get this out, and we'll manage to make all right somehow, so don't you fret. You are a comfort and a blessing to me."

She was very grateful for these tender words ; she had never felt affection for the Laird until now—misfortune had drawn them so close together.

Her eyes sparkled through tears with a brilliant idea, and she almost gasped in her haste to utter it.

"My father has money in the bank ; can I not go and get that ? Then it would be easier for you to make up the difference, and I would be so proud to think that we had been able to help you—it would make me very happy."

He patted her head kindly, and was really sorry to disappoint her generous ambition.

"That cannot be, Teenie"—it was the first time he had addressed her by that pet name,

and, except in company, he never afterwards used the formal Christina—"it cannot be unless you have a cheque signed by your father."

He did not say, as he thought, that it would be difficult for him to accept the rescue of Dalmahoy at the hands of Skipper Dan. A curious contradiction, for he would have accepted anything, and would have even expected a great deal, if Teenie had been Methven's heiress.

"But I can go to the bank and tell them that it is my father's money, and that he would do it if he was here. Mr. Shaw will believe me."

"No doubt he would; but he dare not give you the money without your father's signature."

"Is there nothing we can do?"

"Nothing that I can see at present."

"Will not General Forbes help you?"

"No."

"Aunt Jane?"

"She cannot, and wouldn't if she could."

There is no help to be looked for from our relations—as usual. They have all got some absurd notion that I have interfered with their chance of sharing that confounded Methven estate amongst them.”

Teenie smarted under the reference to the Methven property, for it recalled a disagreeable idea which the Laird himself had planted in her mind.

“ Oh, if my father would only come back in time !”

“ Perhaps he will,” said Dalmahoy, to comfort her, rather than with any hope that the skipper would be able to relieve him if he did come back before the sale. “ But, there, now, don’t let us speak any more about it. You are spoiling my digestion ; let me attend to it whilst I have something to digest.”

She wondered how he could speak so lightly under the circumstances.

Another bright idea occurred to her. Grace was coming to Drumliemount to-morrow ; something might be arranged between them. She said nothing of that, however, and she felt

that it was a very bitter extremity indeed which could compel her to make an appeal to Grace for help of this kind. It was a forlorn hope, and she clung to it desperately.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE SEA.



HEY walked together down the winding road—Grace and Teenie, going for a row. Firs, bracken, and the bonnie bright red rowans glancing by them on the road-side; behind, the soft head-line of the hills, drawing near them over the cold, bleak moorland; before them, the sea and rugged coast; high cliffs, on the edge of which the road had been cut, jagged lumps of rock forming a wall along one side to protect travellers from tumbling into the abyss beneath—and these jagged, irregular boulders seemed to the eye of fancy like men and children holding hands to guard the wayfarer from harm.

On the sharp brown promontory of the

Witch's Bay, a group of white sea-gulls, whose eerie cry suggested storm and disaster. One flapped his wings, and set off seaward on a voyage of discovery; and presently the others followed in a body, swooping above the rocks for a minute, and then dropping into the water, all keeping near shore in obedience to the mysterious instinct which warned them of an approaching tempest.

Teenie reached the boat, and looked back for Grace, who was making her way down the steep path, preceded by her collie, Pate. The latter gambolled merrily on the yellow sand, and brought an offering of seaweed to his mistress, which he laid at her feet with a grin of triumph on his goodnatured, ugly face. But he showed a decided dislike to approach too near the water; and when he saw his mistress advance quietly to where Teenie stood, the water rushing up and laving her feet, he came to a dead halt, and stared with a comical, puzzled look, as if the proceedings were altogether beyond his comprehension.

"Will you get in?" said Teenie. "If you

sit at the stern, I can easily push the boat off."

"Are you not to wait for Walter?"

"No, we can come in for him when we see him. Two of the elders have got hold of him, and there's no saying when they may let him go. I'll help you."

She held out her hand as if she had been a man offering assistance to a lady. Grace hesitated, and looked at Pate, who remained at some yards distance, his paws planted before him as if to save himself from tumbling over a precipice.

"Are you afraid? You forget that I can manage a boat, although I cannot direct a Sunday school," said Teenie, laughing, but with just a shade of bitterness in her tone.

Grace got in, and seated herself at the stern, as she had been told. The dog did not follow.

"Come, Pate, come—for shame, sir, to desert me!—but you can go home if you like."

The dog shook himself, glanced backwards

as if he were much more disposed to take his tail between his legs and make for home, than to go on. But he advanced shyly, and at the next sound of his mistress's voice, leapt into the boat and crouched at her feet, looking up into her face as if wondering what this strange vagary could mean. He had never been accustomed to the water, and he did not like it.

Teenie pushed the boat off, and sprang in, nimbly enough, but the effort this cost reminded her unpleasantly of how much strength she had lost.

She paddled slowly out of the bay, and the moment they passed beyond the sheltering arms of the rocks, the little craft began to pitch and toss in a manner most uncomfortable to Grace. Several splashes of 'spray' threatened to spoil the ladies' hats, and warned them that they were likely to get well wet. Teenie was indifferent for her own part, but she saw Grace clutch the side of the boat and look anxiously around; then she looked also.

The waves came sweeping inward, white-crested and murmuring—they were like long arms reaching out to grasp a victim. Overhead, great stretches of blue-black clouds scored with pale amber ; a red glow on the western horizon, from which radiated long smoky wreaths reaching the borders of a light golden lake, and that again was studded with black ragged islets. Eastward, a pale mist rising, like a veil, and spreading slowly over the sea, bringing night, as it seemed, with all its mysteries. The sea, dark green flecked with white heads ; and the long-sweeping waves sang plaintive duets with the wind, now loud and furious, again soft and gentle, as the voice of syrens tempting men to destruction.

“ I’m doubting there is to be a storm,” said Teenie, after looking round ; “ we’ll keep in-shore.”

“ I am sure there is to be a storm,” rejoined Grace, calmly, but making no attempt to conceal the uneasiness she felt. “ Did you not see the birds ?—they knew it. Do you not

see Pate, how he is shivering?—he knows it. I wish you would go in, Teenie, these waves are so strong and terrible.”

“They are very beautiful.” She shook back from her shoulders the long hair, dripping with spray, and gazed at the threatening sea with as much fondness as a mermaid who loved it even in its angriest mood.

“Do make for the shore, Teenie,” said Grace, shuddering as she looked at the waves.

Teenie ceased rowing, but continued to steady the boat with the oars.

“I will in a minute—but I have been selfish again, Grace. I want to say something to you, and I thought I would feel stronger to say it if we were out on the sea. I want you to do something very great for me, and I never could have told you except here.”

“What is it?”

Words came abruptly just then, for Grace disliked the position altogether. The boat lurched to one side; Grace gave a little

scream, and that concealed the half-stifled sob with which Teenie began to speak.

“It is about that money—about your mother” (setting her teeth hard, then); “I want you to get it in time to save Dalmahoy, and you shall have it all back as soon as my father comes home. Your mother has refused, but if you speak to her she will do it for your sake. Oh, Grace! I feel that I shall never be able to lift up my head again if the Laird is turned out of his home, if his daughters are made beggars all through me—through me. Will you do this?—beg, pray, promise anything that may tempt her, only to save them, and she shall have it all back in a very wee while.”

Teenie’s eyes and voice were full of tears, and Grace in her sympathy almost forgot the perils of their position.

“I will try, Teenie; I intended to do my best even without your speaking; but my mother is very stubborn in this matter—she is a little queer, and does not quite understand the position; but if she can be persuaded to

help us, I will persuade her, for Walter's sake and yours."

"But there must be no 'if's'—you must *make* her do it whether she will or no.—Lord help me! I'm feared that my head is going wrong, for I feel that I could rob—ay, murder, to get that miserable siller. You may guess that, when I beg of you, when you see me ready to go down on my knees to you, craving that you would only save them. Oh, I think I will hate you if you fail!—and yet no, no, Grace, I cannot do that; I will aye like you—love you, whether you save them or no."

She dropped at the feet of Grace, sobbing, and the dog whined as if in sympathy or terror. The positions were so entirely reversed—the one who had been so bold and fearless was now so weak and humbled, the other who had been so weak, was now so calm and brave—that Grace herself was most astonished at herself and at Teenie. The latter's passionate appeal made Grace's heart beat fast with affectionate pity, although she

could not realize the bitterness of humiliation which Teenie experienced in making this petition to her, who, she felt, ought to have been the most uncompromising of foes.

The boat gave another lurch, and one of the oars went overboard ; Grace almost capsized the craft in the wild effort she made to clutch it as it swept by on the crest of a wave.

“ For God’s sake, Teenie, save us ! ” cried Grace in alarm.

Teenie rose in a dazed way, and almost fell with the heaving of the boat ; but she steadied herself, and caught the remaining oar just as it too was about to slip through the rowlocks.

The white mist was rapidly approaching them ; in a little while it would be over them, and would shut out the land from their sight, so that they might be for hours tossed about upon the waves without any chance of landing—if they were not swamped long before the mist cleared away. Teenie was conscious of all their danger in an instant ; she sought

for the missing oar, and when she understood what had happened, her face darkened, for the peril was even greater than she had anticipated at the first glance of their position. She looked at Grace, and for an instant a wicked thought possessed her—why should she not leave the boat to its fate, and die there with her? The kindly sea was offering her peace, oblivion, and an end to all sorrow; why should she struggle against it? Why struggle to live, when living was a constant agony and shame?

White-faced and trembling, she turned away from the wicked thought; what a coward love had made her!—she almost feared the sea; she did fear the temptation which was presented to her.

There was a distant murmur as of muffled thunder, and she knew that one of the fierce and vicious squalls which beset the coast was approaching. How many had perished in its fatal swoop! how little hope there was for them in that frail craft at such a moment! But Grace was to be saved—Lord forgive

her!—she thought that for herself she would have made no effort. Then over the dismal gloom of the waters there came the cry of a babe in the manse high up yonder on Drumliemount, and she felt very guilty. There was something to do for Grace's sake, and for the babe's sake.

They had drifted towards Kingshaven Bar—a most dangerous part of the coast in a storm; the ugly shape of the ominous rock called the Wrecker loomed before them. If they could only pass it they would be safe; or if they could only reach the creek which they were nearing, they would escape all serious danger.

Grace was silent and pale, watching Teenie anxiously, but without making a movement or uttering a word to disturb her. Pate whined occasionally, and nestled more closely to the feet of his mistress.

Teenie was guiding the boat by the help of the single oar; suddenly she wheeled it round, pointing the head towards the creek.

“Sit still,” she said between her teeth;

“hold the tiller straight : our only chance is to go in with the tide. Yonder is a wave coming that will either carry us in or to the bottom.”

She changed her seat to a place beside Grace, holding the oar with one hand, whilst with the other she grasped the tiller.

“When I say ‘Steady,’ hold firm for your life.”

There was a strange pause—a momentary silence of sea and wind.

“Do you think,” said Teenie, timorously, “if—if we should sink—do you think you could go up Yonder with no ill thought in your heart towards me ?”

The only reply of Grace was to clasp fervently the hand which rested on the tiller.

Teenie gave the boat one last jerk towards the sheltering creek, drew in the oar, and clasped both hands on those of Grace ; they held the tiller between them, whilst affection and forgiveness of all sins were expressed in that loving clasp which meant to them life or death.

“Steady!” cried Teenie, “here is our safety or our death.”

The mist was following fast, it was already near them, it would soon be overhead—then it would reach the rocky shore, and escape would be almost impossible. The great sea rolled shoreward, swinging the boat up and down. Then came the huge wave upon which Teenie counted to carry them into the creek; but if it should break before they touched the land, or if it should draw them back with it even when they were nearest to safety!—that was a terrible thought.

Everything depended on being able to keep the prow steadily towards the creek. The wave struck the boat with mighty force—hoisted it high in the air, so that the breath left Teenie and Grace; they felt as if suspended above the water, and that presently they must drop into an abyss. But their hands clenched the more tightly upon the tiller; they pressed their bodies close against it, and, lips compressed, faces white, and hearts still, they watched the dark inlet upon

which they were driving—it seemed almost flying. The time was brief, but an age of memories flashed through the minds of the two women as they sat, hands clasped, awaiting the fortune of life or death.

They were driven into the creek; the boat dropped, the keel grated upon sharp stones, then it reeled and staggered as one wave seemed to draw it backward, and another, overleaping the receding one, helped it forward.

Teenie caught up the rope which was fastened to a ring at the prow, and sprang into the water. She scrambled across sharp boulders on to a ledge of rock, and exerting all her strength, she drew the boat close up to the side, where only the spent waves and dashes of spray reached it.

Grace made her way forward, climbing over the seats awkwardly, and grasping Teenie's helping hand, stepped on to the ledge.

"Safe, thank God!" she said quietly; "thank you, Teenie."

"Little thanks to me, who brought you

into the danger. And see, you're drenched to the skin—you'll get your death of cold."

Grace smiled—feebly, for she felt very weak.

"You are no better off yourself."

"It does not matter for me," was the indifferent answer, but so low that amidst the roar of waters Grace did not hear the words distinctly.

Pate scrambled up beside them, looking very much cowed ; but he gave himself a shake of satisfaction when he found that he was safe on land.

Teenie unfastened the rope from the boat.

"Walter has told me about folk climbing the Alps, how they are all tied together with a rope, so that if one slips, the others save him from tumbling down. So we'll tie ourselves with this, and if you should miss your foot, I'll keep you from falling."

Grace would have objected, but when she looked up at the rugged face of the rocks they had to climb, she yielded to Teenie's plans.

“ I’ve often gone up these rocks for fun, and I can do it the easier now that it’s a necessity. It’s not so hard as it looks, and Pate will follow us.”

She knew every step of the way, and with her sure foot and steady eye there was not much danger in the ascent, but to Grace it was full of peril. At times she thought the sea was rolling up the crags, intent upon claiming the victims who had so narrowly escaped its wrath. Then the white mist enveloped them, so that she could barely see where to plant her feet, where to catch with her hands. She felt giddy, and would have certainly fallen, but for the wise precaution which Teenie had adopted. She made even a greater effort to keep steady than she might have been capable of had she been alone, knowing that any stumble endangered Teenie’s life as well as her own.

They attained the summit at last, and stepped out upon the road. The dog capered about wildly for joy ; the two women sat down to rest. Grace was warm with grate-

ful thoughts ; Teenie was pallid, cold, and shivering now that the danger was past—she who had been so firm and skilful whilst these qualities were most needed.

“Walter will be so vexed with me,” she said slowly, as she unfastened the rope from her waist.

“He will be too glad and too thankful to see you safe, Teenie, to be vexed with you. Oh, what a strong, brave woman you are !”

She kissed her affectionately, and then uttered a little cry of amazement and alarm, for not the weak woman, but the strong one, gave way, and Grace found Teenie fainting in her arms. The strain had been too much for her, and she lay there by the roadside, quite helpless.

CHAPTER XVII.

THROUGH THE MIST.



RACE in the first moment of alarm looked hurriedly up and down the road, in the hope of seeing some one who might assist her. But the mist enveloped them so closely that she could not see clearly beyond a few yards distance. There was no sound but the wild sough of the wind, and the angry voice of the sea breaking against the rocks below. She shuddered at the recollection of their narrow escape—an escape entirely due to Teenie's skill and courage.

She hastily unfastened her friend's dress at the neck, wiped the pale face with her wet cloak, and then vigorously chafed the cold hands. The dog, meanwhile, was moving

round the two women as if with a human sense of their distress and eager to relieve it.

“Walter, Walter!” said Grace tremulously.

That was a name with which Pate was familiar, and next to his mistress, no one had been so kind to him as the young minister. He stood a minute as if trying to understand what was expected from him. Then with a yelp he sprang forward and disappeared in the mist.

The sky seemed to darken, and the mist changed from white to black; the sea roared louder and angrier at every moment; the wind swept over them with a keener blast and more dismal cry than before. Grace, shivering in her wet clothes, continued her efforts to restore animation to Teenie’s cold limbs, and was at length gratified by signs of recovery.

Teenie drew a long breath, and began to open her eyes, staring bewilderedly about her. Just then a man’s voice was heard in the darkness which surrounded them.

“Good heavens, Grace! what have you been doing?”

“We have been nearly drowned, and Teenie has fainted.”

“How thoughtless she is!” he exclaimed, and stooping he took her very tenderly in his arms, murmuring, “My poor, brave lass.”

She made a slight movement as if to repulse him, and then she clung to his protecting arms. Without observing the first movement, he raised her up, passed his hand over her brow, and addressed to her warm and loving words. Then, as if remembering Grace, suddenly he said—

“I have been seeking you everywhere—I could not believe that Teenie would have taken you out in the boat with the signs of a storm so clear before her, and she knows them so well. When I saw Pate I thought you had taken a walk instead of a sail.”

“I don’t think Teenie noticed how stormy the sea looked when we went out,” said Grace.

“Oh, but I did,” cried Teenie, starting up, with a curious laugh; “and, as Wattie might

think, I wanted to drown you. But I was not thinking of that, Grace ; it's just as he says, I am so thoughtless. There never was danger on the sea to me, and I forgot that you were different. Oh, I have been so thoughtless that I have spoiled all our lives !”

There was an undercurrent of passionate bitterness in her voice that startled both listeners ; and the surprise was increased by the suddenness with which she rose to her feet ; if she had been only shamming instead of having been in a faint, she could not have regained consciousness and strength more rapidly.

Her words were cruel to Walter, because they indicated so much doubt of his love for her ; and they seemed cruel to Grace, because they harped upon a subject which she had been implored not to mention again. But Teenie had not the least idea of the unpleasant interpretations which were placed on her words ; she felt a pang and she uttered it. She had no thought of giving pain to any one.

“Take my arm,” said the husband, “and let us get up to the house.”

“No, give Grace your arm, and she will take mine on the other side. I’m all right again, but we must walk quickly to keep the cold out. Come along.”

She shivered with cold as she spoke, her wet garments clinging closely about her. They stepped forward in the order she had arranged, and she really seemed to have all the strength she professed to have. She talked and laughed as if there had been no danger, and as if there were no discomfort in their present condition.

“We’re a bonnie pair of ducks, Grace, with our draiglet tails. The mist has just come on to save us from being laughed at by the folk.—You should have been with us, Wattie; it was grand to see the big waves come tumbling in upon us, and to see Grace sitting as quiet as though she had been on the water all her life, when if she had budged, or fainted like me, we’d have gone to the bottom as sure as death.”

The latter expression added much solemnity to any declaration of the country folk.

"You have given me a fright, Teenie, although you don't seem to be much frightened yourself," answered Walter, trying to smile, yet feeling uneasy at her strange humour.

"It will do you good, and keep you from thinking of other matters which will be all right in a few days."

She was quite cheery as she pressed the arm of Grace, whilst making this allusion to the bargain they had made. But all the time there was running through her head a bitter recollection of those old letters, and of the unrequited love she had discovered in them. How she admired Grace, and how she envied her the brave generous calmness with which she had sacrificed to him her dearest hopes! And how she wished that she had never known how very dear those hopes had been!

Grace could talk well enough when alone

with Teenie or Walter, but always felt as if she had nothing to say when with them both; she was even sensible of some awkwardness. She was annoyed with herself for this, because she had nothing to speak about to the one that she would not have told to the other. The awkward feeling was there, however, and despite herself she could not overcome it—just because a third person always has the influence of a non-conductor upon all sympathetic conversation. She felt this more keenly than usual on the present occasion, when she wished most to speak so as to bring these two closer together than they seemed to be.

She had an instinctive sense that she was standing on a volcano, which would presently break forth, carrying destruction to all things near it. But she knew so little—the inner doubts of Walter and Teenie had been so carefully hidden from her, that whatever she might suspect she dared not speak.

Walter was so quiet and reserved; Teenie was so boisterous and strange: presenting

two opposing elements which would not unite : and Grace was frightened — more frightened than she had been when in peril of her life a little while ago—although she could not say why.

She tried to explain to him the adventure of the afternoon, and how bravely Teenie had acted; but Teenie always interrupted, laughed at the danger, and made light of her own exertions, attributing the whole success of their rescue to the calmness of Grace.

They reached Drumliemount at last, and notwithstanding their wet clothes, they were heated by the exercise of the walk.

“The very best thing for us,” said Teenie, and she insisted upon seeing to the comfort of her guest before she would do anything for herself.

When everything had been provided for Grace, Teenie went to her own room and changed her clothes. She was fastening her gown when Walter entered and, placing his hands on her shoulders, looked inquiringly and fondly into her eyes.

“What is the matter, Teenie—have I done anything to annoy you?”

“Me!—no; why should you think that?”

“You have been so excited!”

“Because I am blither than I have been for a long while—Dalmahoy will not be sold, Wattie, and that is one misfortune the less of the many I have brought to you.”

She gave him a short quick kiss, and resumed her toilet.

“You dear, stupid lassie!” he said, placing his arm around her, “you have brought me no misfortune; and you have taught me many things without the knowledge of which I never could have hoped to accomplish anything. Why will you persist in regretting our marriage? I shall begin to think that you liked somebody else better than me.”

She wheeled round, one side of her hair in her mouth, the other held out at its full length whilst the brush was applied to the roots—and stopped there.

“Are you quite sure,” she said, speaking

through the hair, "that you do not like somebody else better than me?"

"Quite sure," was the frank and immediate response, "if you would only be reasonable."

She proceeded with the arrangement of her hair.

"Just that—but I'm not reasonable, and so you can't be sure."

"What is the matter with you?" exclaimed Walter, utterly puzzled, a little vexed, but anxious to avoid anything like a misunderstanding.

"Nothing, except that Dalmahoy is to be saved and I am awfully proud and happy."

"How?"

"I'll tell you in a week or so. Now go and send down to the inn for a gig, so that you may drive Grace home. She will never be able to walk."

She had not been in such gay spirits since the birth of Baby. Walter was not satisfied; there was something unnatural in this sudden gaiety which puzzled as well as astonished him. However, he carried out her wishes

regarding the gig. When they met at the tea-table, Teenie was almost if not quite as bright as in the old days, before she had learned any sense of fear. To Grace she was devoted with that eager and hearty hospitality, which receives its best reward in being cordially accepted. Grace, although quiet, gave that most desirable reward to Teenie's exertions, and could not help laughing at the absurd way in which the young wife represented their plight in the boat, although she still regarded the position as almost too serious to be joked about.

After tea, the gig was at the gate, and Walter was ready to drive his cousin home. Grace hesitated, and asked if there was not a man from the inn; but Teenie scouted the idea of any one but Walter taking her home. She was very particular in wrapping up her guest warmly, to protect her from the mist and night air; she fastened the shawls with her own hands, and tucked in the rug under Grace's feet. The last word whispered to her was "Remember."

“You may be sure of that,” answered Grace, pressing her hand affectionately.

And so they drove off.

Teenie proceeded to attend to various household affairs, to see that Baby was comfortably settled for the night, and to tell Lizzie, the sleepy domestic, that she might go to bed. When all was done, she went into her husband’s room, sat down, got up, and fidgeted about in a restless way. The lamp displeased her ; now it was burning too high, again too low, and she suddenly turned it out altogether ; then she had to hunt for matches to relight it. She sat down again, an elbow on the table, her head resting on her hand, whilst the fingers of the other hand traced imaginary hieroglyphics on the table-cover.

She was in a very contradictory mood—hope, passion, love, and spleen—or jealousy ?—born of the love, and of the torturing conviction that her love had wrought pain where it ought to have brought happiness. But she had resolved to be merry—resolved to go back to the old blithe days when she had neither fear

nor doubt of the future. Dalmahoy was to be saved, and then her father would come back like the grand prince in the ballad, would put everything right, and she would be so proud of him ! Then what had she to trouble herself about ?

In answer, there came a vision of the gig driving through the mist across the moorland, Grace sitting couthily by Walter's side, and not anxious to be home ; he with his grave face eagerly watchful of the road, lest in the darkness they should meet with an accident. Both silent—or perhaps Grace was talking, and her sweet low voice would remind him of all that he had lost for one who had brought him neither wit nor wealth—one who had brought him nothing but ill-fortune since their troth had been first plighted.

Would he think of that ? And if he did, would he not regret what he had done ? He must do so ; he must think of the Methven estate, the expectation of which had reconciled him to marrying her ; and he must feel the chagrin of one who discovers that he has been

induced to make a bargain under false pretences. She winced cruelly at that; and for an instant she had a vague idea that these thoughts were degrading to Walter, therefore degrading to herself; that she was forgetting all his tokens of love, and that she was overlooking the brave, self-forgetful loyalty of Grace.

Baby cried, and she flew to him; he was teething and he was fractious. She tried all motherly arts to soothe him to sleep; she talked to him in the sweet nonsensical prattle which is the recognized language of babyhood; she sang to him in a tender undertone, but it was that sad ballad of "The Lass of Loch-ryan" which rose to her lips, and almost unconsciously she repeated one of the saddest of its verses:—

"Fair Annie turned her round about—

‘Weel, since that it be sae,

May never a woman that has borne a son

Ha’e a heart sae fou o’ wae.’”

Baby fell asleep to that eerie wail, and she stole softly downstairs. She went to the

door to listen for the sound of the returning wheels. The lamp in the window above the doorway cast a few rays of light into the darkness, only to render the blackness beyond the more dense. The light fell upon the gravel at her feet, and she herself stood like a black streak against the light from the room behind her. She heard nothing save the wild uproar of the wind, occasionally broken by the distant and melancholy roll of the sea.

“God help my father this night,” she murmured, and thinking of him, the hardness which had been growing round her heart whilst she brooded about Walter and Grace, was softened ; so she added, penitently and tenderly, “and God help Wattie, too, for he has much to bear.”

She remained a long time at the door ; and fancy raised strange phantasmagoria in the darkness. She saw mysterious forms slowly shaping out of the gloom, rising up and towering above her as if they would fall and crush her, then suddenly breaking against the

few rays of light—but only to be followed by others; trees and bushes seemed to walk towards her through the shadow, assuming fearful shapes, and all threatening her.

“It’s an awful night,” she muttered, going in and closing the door after her, whilst she shivered with cold and terror at the phantoms she had seen.

Walter was driving cautiously across the moor, feeling the penetrating mist and wind despite his wraps, and he was muttering to himself—

“Why is it we cannot understand each other? Is it that she cannot or will not try?”

He took the gig down to the inn, and walked home. He did not see the light until close to the gate. When he opened the door, she sprang out to meet him.

“You are safe!” she cried with passionate delight; and all the hardness which had been growing upon him, too, disappeared.

“Quite safe,” he said, embracing her fondly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NIGHT.



WITH the morning Teenie's hopes increased, and her gaiety of spirits ran up to the height of the thermometer. She would explain nothing to Walter, but she was merry—very gentle and attentive to him. She thought of many things to add to his comfort which she had hitherto neglected. She seemed to be happy, and trying to make him so.

Gloomy as was the position in which he found himself, and discontented as he felt inclined to be at times with her apparently unreasonable gaiety, it was an unspeakable joy to him to see her glad, and the shadows of all her threatening ailments cast a long way behind her. What an inscrutable crea-

ture she was! now bright as the morning, and again dark and sad as the night.

He had often puzzled himself about her; often, when annoyed by her thoughtless ways, even when he had been speaking to her sternly—cruelly, she would have said—he was questioning himself about her, asking if he did not misunderstand her altogether, and if some other conduct on his part might not draw her down to the level of ordinary mortals, or up to it.

But the fitful humours which he could not control remained and baffled him. She irritated him, drove him to the brink of fierce passion, and then a few winning childish words, and he took her to his breast, ready to brave any calamity for her sake, and so that she might not suffer.

He took himself severely to task. He had introduced this child into a new life, a new world. Had he guided her steps with sufficient care? He had tried to do so—God knew how earnestly he had tried—but had he succeeded? He had miscalculated

his own fortunes ; the unexpected distress of Dalmahoy added to his embarrassment—since the blame of it could be charged to him—and amidst all this confusion of troubles, could he say that he had fulfilled his duty to her ? No. The sense of failure in himself was so keen that he was ready to accept any blame. But that did not make their life any the more satisfactory.

There had been growing up between them a mysterious something, palpable to both, inexplicable to both—a something which they strove with all their might to repress. Yet it grew, and they were conscious that this monster was separating them, slowly but surely, in spite of all their efforts to extinguish it. They were like two people cast from a wreck upon the sea ; they strove to keep together, they prayed that they might be permitted to keep side by side ; but the waves rolled up and they were drifted apart, each straining the eyes to keep the other in sight. They wished otherwise, but the waves were stronger than their wishes.

As the days passed, and no message came from Grace, Teenie's humour underwent many changes—gay, sad, defiant, hysterical. To Walter it was torture. He coaxed, he scolded, he implored without effect. It was an April mood, and neither his rage nor his love could change its course.

At length Grace came herself, and Teenie read at once in the sad eyes that she had failed; Dame Wishart was inexorable in her resolution to give no help.

“Did you try?” said Teenie fiercely.

“If it had been for myself I could not have done more,” was the answer.

“You promised that you would arrange it.”

“I can do nothing without my mother's sanction.”

“Why does she refuse when she knows that we have no other help at hand—when she knows that her money will be repaid in a few months, with whatever interest she wants?”

Grace turned her head away. She could

not answer that question, and she could not meet the angry gaze of the young wife.

"My mother is not well, and she has strange fancies. She is unusually stubborn on this subject."

"Because of me," exclaimed Teenie bitterly; then passionately, "and—oh, Lord!—it *is* possible to see folk drowning, and keep back the hand that could save them! But it's me—it's me that is to blame for it all."

"There is time yet, Teenie."

"Time! Will she change her mind?"

"I hope so," faltered Grace. She could not say more, for indeed she had little hope.

Teenie understood, and she was ungraciously exasperated by the attempt to console her. She had built so much upon the success of Grace in persuading her mother to advance the money, that the disappointment was to her generous, passionate nature, unbearable. The one clear idea that she had was, that her marriage to Walter was the only cause of Dame Wishart's obstinacy in this matter—which was the fact—and that, therefore, the

whole misfortune of the Dalmahoy family rested on her shoulders.

The thought stung her almost to frenzy. She found difficulty in speaking to Grace with anything like calmness ; she could not find the least comfort in reassuring hopes which were whispered to her ; and she was much relieved when left alone. All the bright visions of the last few days were dissipated ; ruin was at hand, and she was the cause. That was all she understood.

“ Oh, if my father would only come back ! ” she moaned, leaning her head against the wall for support.

Was there nothing she could do ? A piteous wail seemed to rise up from her heart, echoing the terrible word, “ nothing.” If she had been out of the way, if she had refused him when he asked her to be his wife, there would have been none of this trouble. That thought made her fierce, then spiteful against herself, Walter, Grace, and everybody ; and presently she was furious with herself for feeling so vicious.

He came home late in the evening, very tired. The coming Sabbath was fixed for the administration of the Sacrament, and during the day he had been obliged to visit many of his parishioners, whose houses lay far apart. It had been an anxious day mentally ; physically his limbs had been severely taxed, and indeed, but for an occasional lift in a farmer's gig, he could not have accomplished all that he had done.

He was served with a steak burnt to a cinder. The knife chipped off splinters, but could not cut it. He made a feeble joke about meat being transformed into sawdust, and to his amazement he encountered a sharp retort to the effect that he was always complaining, and that if he wanted fine cookery he ought to engage a cook. He was innocent of the least thought of complaint.

Is it not wonderful that a tiny spark will blow up a huge powder magazine, which till that moment remained so quiet and harmless-looking ? Is it not wonderful that a little touch of electricity, travelling miles in mystery,

will discharge a torpedo, which blows a big ship into the air with all its freight of life, hopes, and fears ?

They never knew how it came about. The pitiful trifles which involve great crises always pass unnoticed. But presently the magazine exploded ; she was passionately upbraiding him ; he was coldly answering. She was suddenly fired by the accumulation of jealous thoughts which she had hitherto held in check ; he for the first time remembered that he had sacrificed some position and much comfort in marrying her. At the same moment he checked the thought, and felt that there was something mean in his nature which allowed it to rise at all.

At length she said, desperately, unthinkingly—

“ You would be glad if you had never married me. It would have been a good thing for me if you hadn’t.”

She was in consternation at her own words the moment they were uttered. She felt that they had been spoken by her evil genius—not

by herself. She was bitterly sorry ; yet the evil genius held her under its sway, and she could not instantly recall the words ; she could not, as she wished to do, throw herself upon his neck, and implore his pardon.

But she glanced timorously at him from under her eyebrows.

He stood quite dazed, glaring at her ; then his brow darkened—he was reviewing himself even then, and taking blame to himself.

He spoke in cold deliberate tones, every word falling on her heart like a blow.

“ Yes, it would have been—better for you—had we never been married.”

He did not say that it would have been better for him if they had never been married, but she did not observe the difference. Even then he remembered the sweet thoughts and brave aspirations which she had inspired, and he was grateful to her ; all his nature throbbed with affection for her, and yet he remained apparently cold and stern.

But she only felt that something had snapped ; the last cord which held them to-

gether seemed to be rent ; and with a low cry of pain she sank on a chair.

He walked quickly from the room—quickly, or he would have seen her with head bowed almost to her knees, hands spread over her face, sobbing ; and the sight would have brought him to her side again, full of remorse, and taking all the blame to himself. He did not see that ; the torture in which they had been living was to end ; better it should end now, he thought ; and so he hurried away, and shut himself up in his study.

She heard the door close, and it seemed to her as if he had shut her out from his heart for ever. She felt like one who, still living, hears the knell for her own funeral.

What had she done ? She had driven him away from her. She had forced upon him the conviction of her unsuitability to be his wife. She had compelled him to regret that he had married her !

She did not even yet see the difference his words had expressed, between regretting the marriage on her account, and on his own.

Perhaps he was glad—he would think of Grace, and would wish that he had never seen Teenie.

A hard, wicked feeling crept over her, and she was tempted to a dreadful step. She would go away, and leave him free to think of Grace; that would at any rate be a kindness to him. And maybe, when she was away, he would divine something of the pain which she had endured—because she loved him.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOR HIS SAKE.



HE was frightened at the mad impulse which stirred within her. Go away—where? She did not know. She might go down to the Norlan' Head, and resume the old life just as if there had been no marriage and no Baby. But she could not do that, for Ailie, with her plain matter-of-fact way of viewing things, would seize her by the arm and drag her back to Drumliemount.

She was in a dazed state: thoughts quite confused, and uncontrollable: blood pulsing violently through her veins, and the sense of a big pain in her breast which would presently make her heart burst. But there was one leading thought which, like the air in a fantasia, although often apparently drowned by the

loud notes of the variations, was always present, and was the theme and inspiration of all the rest. If she could only go away and hide herself somewhere, Walter would be free to think of Grace. If she were only out of the way, Dame Wishart would not hesitate to give the necessary assistance to Dalmahoy.

It was a foolish idea, but she was in a species of frenzy, in which she only saw that her presence there was the cause of infinite embarrassment to her husband, and would be the cause of ruin to his family. Love and pride combined to urge her to any sacrifice to serve them, and a childish ignorance of the world's ways made her fancy that she had only to go away, and all would be set right.

She was full of bitterness at the thought of the quarrel with Walter; and her sufferings were all the more poignant because she was conscious that she had provoked it, and had taken the leading part in it. But he had not tried to save her from herself. If he had only spoken one kind word, if he had only crossed the room and kissed her, all her passion would

have disappeared, and she would have been ready to lie down at his feet and die for his sake. But he had not spoken, although he must have known that it would have been the truest kindness to have done so. He could not care for her as he used to do, or he would have known that.

Kind acts are the crystals of affection, the beautiful tokens of love, which has no other visible presence. Clearly he did not care for her, or he would not have failed at this crisis to win her back to him by some kind act or word. Morbid meditations are a sort of waking nightmare; and with all the horrors of nightmare there came back to her just now the memory of that miserable assertion of the Laird, that Walter had believed her to be the heiress of George Methven when he asked her to be his wife. At that, Passion rose again, and she was ready to misinterpret his every action, from the day on which she had listened to his confession in the Witch's Bay till the present moment. But Love cried out; and although in the storm of Passion its voice

was scarcely heard at first, the sound soon swelled, until it overcame all other sounds, and left her crying, only wishing that she could do anything—sacrifice anything to make him happy.

And she could sacrifice something—herself. She could go away, and that would remove every difficulty from his path.

“Oh, if my father would only come home!” she moaned again. “Maybe I could find him. Maybe he’ll touch at Lerwick or Aberdeen, and I might meet him, and bring him back in time; or we could go away and never come back, and Walter would be happy.”

There came a dreamy revival of the old yearning for the unknown something beyond the horizon of her life, and she got up slowly. Her eyes were dry now, and they had that expressionless inward look of one walking in sleep.

She went upstairs, and put on her cloak and hat. She tied the strings very tightly. A slight cry from Baby’s crib, and she stood like one petrified. Then she flew to his side

and bent over him, feeling that here was a chain which held her fast to husband and home. Would she ever be able to break the chain? Could she go away, leaving the bairn for strange hands to nurse? leaving him to grow up to manhood without knowing his mother's face? Could she make this sacrifice, too, for Walter's sake!

Her heart was cruelly racked by the conflict of emotions; for Walter's sake she would go: for Baby's sake she must stay. She swayed ~~too~~ and fro above the child, now bent upon the one course, again upon the other. If Baby had only wakened, he would have conquered; but after that first little cry he had got the feeder in his mouth, and after a vigorous attack he dozed off again, without opening his eyes upon the yearning, troubled face of the mother bending over him. The openings to the right path and the wrong are divided only by such trifling accidents as this, the sleeping or the waking of a babe.

As she raised her head the room seemed to darken suddenly. It was only the candle

which required snuffing, and the wick was spluttering in a ring of grease. But, with her nerves tense-strung, old childish superstitions possessed her; the shadows in the room assumed fateful forms; she looked at the candle with a dreamy eagerness to descry one of those tiny sparks on the burning wick, which were supposed to indicate coming messages of good or evil. She saw none.

She snuffed the candle, and in the bright flame which sprang up, her face appeared white and cold. There was a shadow on the brow, reflecting the gloom and bitterness of her thoughts. How very bad she felt herself to be! how wickedly she had blundered, and blundered with her eyes open! If Walter had not told her about Grace, then she would have been able to feel that this misery had not been brought about by any act of her own. But he had told her everything, and she alone was to blame for it all. She ought to have known that it was selfishness which tempted her to say "Yes," when she should have said "No." If she had only had a little

pride, then she might have said no. But she loved him so very much that she could not turn away from him; and now it had come to pass that, even for his sake, she must go away.

If Grace had been selfish or unkind in any way, she could have endured everything; but the grand self-forgetful love of Grace shamed her, and made her feel that she had been mean and cruel. At moments she felt as if she hated Grace for her devotion; even the child turned to her with smiles of delight whenever she appeared. Next moment all the rage was against herself for the wickedness of her jealousy. She only thought that they would be very happy if she were away.

She moved towards the door, and then the mother's heart cried out again. She swayed a minute between the passionate yearning for her child, and the extravagant idea of self-sacrifice for Walter's sake, for the bairn's, and for Grace's sake, which was driving her to despair.

She wheeled round, dropped on her knees

at the foot of the crib, her hands clutching the iron bars convulsively.

“Dear Father, which art in heaven . . . help me . . . teach me what I am to do, that they may be happy. Walter is very good and kind. . . . She is very true and noble. Dear Father, I have wronged them both very much. Help me to make them happy. I only want to make them happy, and I’ll do anything that You will for their sake. . . . I’m an awfully poor creature, but I dinna want to hurt anybody. Help me, then, and guide my steps so that there may be bright sunshiny days yet in store for them. You who see all hearts, look into mine, and see that I want everything for him and for the bonnie bairn You sent to me—nothing for myself. . . . Dear Lord, help me, and guide me.”

She stayed a long time on her knees there, the past life and the many sad passages in it flitting through her mind ; the wild act she meditated obtaining consistency and justification from the fancied regrets of her husband,

and from her desire to do anything that might give him comfort.

She quite misunderstood him—misunderstood his words, his looks, and his sorrow—and she suffered accordingly. If he had only come upstairs then ! But he did not come ; and she felt, in her rapid changes of humour, spiteful towards him that he could have left her in such distress without any effort to see her and to console her.

She got up, not daring to look at Baby, and went out of the room quickly. Downstairs she halted at the door of his study. Her fingers trembled on the handle, and she listened. There was no sound. If he would only speak, only breathe her name—one word, and she would be saved. But he was silent.

She touched the door with her lips ; then a passionate sob, and she ran out of the house.

He had heard the fingers on the handle : he had heard the sob, and yet he would not move. He remained with his eyes fixed upon

a book, to the words of which they were utterly blind. His heart was very hard. She had been cruel to him—cruel to Grace ; and his bitterest thought was that she had shown this cruel disposition when he most needed comfort, when he most craved for loving sympathy, which gives courage and strength. He would not move.

Yet a cold feeling of desolation crept over him as he heard the wind souging wildly round the house, mingled with the distant roar of the sea. In the brief hush which occurred at intervals, he heard that low piteous sob again, and he was filled with vague unrest.

Teenie was so fierce and impulsive, so reckless of herself, that when roused to passion such as he had seen her in to-night, God only knew what wild or silly act she might do. Then she was so generous—what pain she must be suffering !

He got up hastily and crossed the floor, halted at the door : turned slowly back towards his chair ; wheeled round again ; altered

his mind once more, flung the book from him and sat down, pressing his hands as in a vice between his knees.

He would not go to her at present ; he would leave her to think out the matter for herself, leave her to sleep off the fit of passion, and in the morning he would endeavour to show her how mistaken she was. She had gone to bed, no doubt ; he would not disturb her this night.

He took up the book again, and applied himself to its perusal resolutely. His eyes wandered over the words ; mechanically the leaves were turned—the mind grasped nothing. Impatiently he looked back to see what he had been reading ; he made out half a sentence, then went on as before—Teenie, the quarrel, the vague fears, dancing like tiny silhouette figures before him, and not a word of the book was plain to him.

A door banged, and he started quite nervously. What a draught swept in, how cold it was, and how fiercely the wind blew ! The air was full of strange voices, and the sil-

houettes became more frantic in their eerie dance.

His elbow on the arm of the chair, he rested his cheek on his knuckles. This was a bad preparation for the Sacrament Sabbath; to-morrow, Saturday; then the Sabbath. He had worked hard preparing the younger members of his flock for the Sacrament; he had given out the "tokens," and he felt himself now to be the most unfit person to approach the tables. He made a stubborn effort to wrench his mind into a better form, and failed. It was Teenie who flitted before his eyes, disturbing him and rendering all thought, except of her, impossible.

He did not blame her much—he was full of sorrow on her account and his own. He had made her so miserable—she who had always been so happy, always like a gleam of sunshine, beautiful in herself, and a source of joy to others.

Whatever his frailties or errors might be, Walter was thoroughly honest in thought and intention, always more anxious to see the

right of the other side in any argument than to justify himself. His love for her never changed. In all the troubles which had come upon them, he had never repented the marriage; his only regret was that she had to suffer with him, when he had hoped that their life would be so quiet and simple!

How terribly had he miscalculated his position, and the possibilities of happiness which it offered! Petty squabbles in connection with the kirk, disputes with the heritors and elders; the pitiful need of pence, in spite of the most niggardly economy, which was a torture to him,—not because he had to exercise self-denial, but because he had to deny her so much, and because there were so many things he wished her to have. He writhed under this miserable necessity, thinking of her. How many bitter thoughts he had hidden from her; what agony he had suffered when her eyes had gazed wistfully at some woman's prize in a shop window—a bonnet, a shawl, or a jewel—which he could not give her. He knew all about covetousness and the wicked-

ness of it, but such a very little money would have made her so happy ! Self-denial is an admirable principle ; economy is beautiful—in the abstract—but when one is obliged to practise it constantly, the heart becomes hard and miserly, or it suffers torture.

Then he saw so many people rich and mean, or rich and merry, never requiring to deny anything to those they loved, and apparently not a bit the worse for their wealth and self-indulgence ; he sometimes trembled at the gloomy view he was inclined to take of the distribution of the elements of happiness. But it was never of himself he thought in this way—it was always in association with his wife. All their troubles descended to the bitterly mean level of a want of money.

He scorned himself for the miserable condition of mind into which he had fallen, when all the noble aims and hopes of life disappeared, and only the craving for money seemed to possess him—only money seemed to contain the charm which would bring back joy and peace to his heart.

“God forgive me,” he groaned, “but money would have saved us, and I cannot help feeling that poverty has a sharp sting. Well, I shall not try to cheat myself by hiding my head in the sand. I accept the fortune that is given to me, and in my own suffering I shall learn much that will help me to help others. Earnest work must bring peace.”

A brave resolution and his thorough sincerity in making it seemed to lighten his heart of some of the gloom which lay so heavily upon it. He would turn his face to the future, and he would refuse to look backward.

She went out and ran down to the gate, flung it open, and stopped, listening. Was that Baby crying, or was Walter coming after her? No; just the wind blustering, and the sea dashing wrathfully against the rocks. Rain was beginning to fall in big drops.

She dragged herself away from the gate, and her steps were very heavy. She suddenly started into a run, as if she were eager

to escape the temptation to return. He would follow, he would overtake her and bring her back, and she would be so overwhelmed with shame! She struck into a field in order to escape him. But she halted, for there seemed to be a cry from Baby which stayed her steps, and drew her back towards the house in spite of herself.

How dark it was, and how fiercely the wind blew! Then the vague terrors which darkness always suggests to the superstitious—robbers, ghosts, and warlocks—rose before her. What might not happen to her in that weird night? Above the din of the storm there was in her heart that faint baby's cry, now low and pitiful, again sharp and shrill, dragging her steps back when she would go forward. But she was going to save Walter and his family; Dalmahoy was to be rescued from ruin, and Grace was to be made happy. So she would be very strong, and she would suffer anything for their dear sakes.

Then she would run again, looking back at

intervals, and suddenly she came into collision with something. Her head came round quickly, and she could see in the uncertain light the broad cap of a man, his coat-tails and an armless sleeve fluttering furiously in the wind. Robbery and murder were the least of the horrors which this solitary encounter suggested to her mind.

She dropped on her knees before the figure, crying excitedly—

“I have no siller but a half-crown—I’ll give you that, and it will do you no good to murder me.”

She fumbled for her pocket to bring out the half-crown, but the man made no answer ; and she trembled, for silence is always terrible when there is much at stake.

As she held up her piece of money, a broad flash of lightning crossed the landscape, and illumined the figure—the armless sleeve, the coat-tails and rags fluttering in the wind—and she gasped with the sense of relief she felt. She was kneeling in supplication to a “tattie doolie”—a scarecrow, an old coat and cap

ties on to a stick—which she had mistaken for a man of the most villanous character.

She went on again, stumbling often, and trembling, not at the storm or darkness, but at the cry within her breast which blamed her for what she was doing. Every sigh of the wind seemed to give that cry words, and it called, “Come back, come back !”

But it was for their sake, and she would be brave. She would endure the pain. She would pass beyond that distant horizon-line, and lose herself in the mysterious beyond, or she would meet her father, and bring him back in time to save Dalmahoy from the auctioneer.

The night and the storm seemed to be in league against her, they interfered so much with her movements, misled her so often, and so often tried to turn her from her purpose. God help those who were at sea on such a night as this ; and God help her, for she was at sea too, without compass, almost without hope, and in greater danger even than those

whose lives were entrusted to the wind and waves.

She hurried along, still halting, and then running away from the temptation to turn back. She was going towards Aberdeen, as she hoped, where there was a possibility of learning something about the "Christina." If not there, then at Peterhead. It was an utterly vague and uncertain chase, but she hoped for something, and she did not know what. All that was clear to her was that by going away she would leave Walter free to be happy, and that her absence or loss—would it be thought a loss?—would induce Dame Wishart to help the Laird, and so help Walter. She was ready to sacrifice anything for that end—they never could know how much she was ready to suffer so that they might be happy—quite content if they would think of her sometimes kindly.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER THE STORM.



WHITE, wet morning, and a loud sobbing wind; the sea still rolling in high long waves, but with a slower movement than during the night, as if its fury were spent, and these were only the fitful upheavings of the subsiding passion. The sun shot great shafts of fire through the mist, dividing it into white streams, which slowly lifted from sea and shore, revealing the flashing waves, and rocks and trees and grass glittering with watery diamonds.

The wind penetrated the marrow of the bones with a chill, damp feeling. So Walter found when he stepped out of the house, and he buttoned up to the neck his black coat, which he had not changed since yesterday's

visits to the parishioners. His face haggard and pale, his hand clutching a staff with nervous firmness. He found it necessary to grasp something, in order to help him to endure the pain and vexation caused by the discovery he had made.

Baby crying without any attempt being made to soothe him, Walter hurried upstairs, his heart beating fast with fears to which he dared not give shape. He found that Teenie had not been in bed that night. Her hat and cloak gone ; that was a relief ; she had doubtless gone down to the Norlan' Head, to spend the night with Ailie. He felt pained that she had done this, which would create such a scandal in the district ; and vexed that she could have left Baby without any one to mind him. (He did not think that she had expected him to seek her long before this hour.)

But it was an intense relief to know where she was. He summoned the girl, Lizzie, to attend to Baby ; then he put on his hat, took staff in hand, and set out with the intention of giving Teenie a good scolding for her

ridiculous conduct. He never doubted that in her fit of passion, just to annoy him, she had gone off to her father's house, and he would find her there. He had hoped to meet her in the morning in a calmer mood, and ready to listen to kindly counsel and loving words; perhaps the violence of her action might render her the more willing to listen.

He knew nothing yet of the poor girl's wild scheme, or of the devotion and love which had driven her to sacrifice everything—child, home, name—for his sake!

He had only proceeded a little way down the road when he encountered Habbie Gowk, leading Beattie instead of bestriding him, and leaning heavily on his staff. Man and donkey looked more and more haggard and weary than the last time they had been seen.

"It's that fortune," growled Habbie, looking wistfully at his faithful companion; "even the brute-beast kens what a vexation of spirit it is, and is just dwining awa' like myself. But I'll pay that writer Currie out yet if he doesna get it for me!"

So, in pity for Beattie, he walked instead of riding. As soon as he saw Walter, he saluted him.

“ Good-morning, minister ; I’m real glad to see you out already. I suppose you’re going down to help the folk ; they’re in sair trouble, and I was just coming up to tell you. It’s been a wild night, and a heap o’ the boats were out ; twa o’ them have come hame keel upmaist and a’ bashed. Red Sandy’s was ane of them, and there’s a wife with four bairns to sing wae’s me for him. The salmon-stakes have been broken down, and there is nae saying what harm has been done. There’s mony folk will feel the losses of last night as long’s they live.”

Walter felt that he was one of them, for he had lost the peace of his home. He glanced down towards Rowanden, and as the mist lifted from the shore, he saw women and bairns, old men, and a few of the younger ones who had been by some fortunate circumstance restrained from venturing out to sea

during the night, moving about excitedly on the rocks and sands.

He understood what it meant, and he did not hesitate a moment ; his own business must wait ; his duty was to be down there amongst the afflicted people, striving to help them by words and acts, to save all who could be saved, and to comfort those who were mourning.

“Thank you, Habbie,” he said. And he went off with long rapid strides, which soon left the poet and Beattie far behind him.

The boom of the sea rolled over the people as they rushed about in wild confusion, beating their hands against the air, striving to do something that might help those whom they loved, and yet bitterly conscious of their powerlessness. The cold green waves lashed the shore, and their retiring murmur seemed to mock the cries of pain of which they were the cause.

“Oh, minister ! can you no help us ?” cried Buckie Willie’s wife, rushing up to him with

dishevelled hair ; “ my man’s out, and there’s no sign of his boat yet. He was cankered when laid up with the rheumatics, but he was a guid man for a’ that ; and there’s our bairns and his mither to fend for. Will not the Lord help us ? ”

“ We must hope for the best and do our best,” was the grave answer ; “ very likely your man has been obliged to put in at some other port, and you’ll have news of him during the day.”

“ Maybe that’s it, minister, I’ll no doubt your word ; but it’s cauld and eerie waiting for the news.” And the woman shuddered as she drew her children round her, the little ones staring in wonder at their mother’s anguish, the eldest rushing about the beach, gathering scraps of wreck which were cast up by the water. Maybe the boy played with a bit of his dead father’s tackle.

“ It’s been terrible work yon, sir,” said Tak’-it-easy Davie, who with his usual luck had spent the night comfortably in bed ; he nodded towards the sea as he spoke. “ I’s e

warrant it'll take two or three thousand to replace the tackle that's been lost, to say nothing o' the lives and the fish. There's a heap o' fine salmon lying up there, but a' bashed and useless. It's been a bad night for fish and folk."

Walter assented to that practical view of matters, and passed on to a group standing near the edge of the water. There were several old men, a number of women, and, behind, white-headed half-dressed bairns, striving to get a glimpse of the something the elders were all bending over.

It was Red Sandy, who had been washed ashore, much cut by the rocks, and one of the men was covering the body with an old sail.

"We've done our best, sir," said Mysie Keith, as Walter approached and way was made for him (as usual, she had been first on the scene of trouble, and was supporting the head of the man); "but it's a' by, and there's no help for him in this world. Speak to his wife."

Mysie drew the sail over the face, and bade the men carry him up to his house.

She moved quietly away, to see where help might be most needed next.

The wife was standing dull and stupefied, looking on ; two children clinging in terror to her skirts ; two others standing a little way off, pressing their knuckles into their eyes, crying, they did not know why, and wondering why " father " was lying there so quiet with all the folk gathered about him.

Walter took the woman by the arm, and gently led her away from the place as the men prepared to lift the body.

" You have a heavy sorrow to bear," said Walter ; " but God will help you."

" He would need," muttered the woman, somewhat dourly ; " there are four bairns to feed."

It was one of Walter's principles never to attempt to deny the apparently unmerited hardships with which people were often afflicted. He could not use the conventional phrases of consolation. He said outright,

“Yes, it is bad—it is terrible, and the cries of agony are natural and necessary. But only have faith, and resignation will soon come. You must suffer, and you must cry; that is a relief. Have faith, and by-and-by you will find happiness; the suffering only endures a little while.”

So he did not tell her that she must not grieve, but that she must try to get over her grief as quickly as possible for the sake of her bairns. Since it was His will to leave her their only guardian, she must endeavour to do her duty faithfully.

There was a simple earnestness in his manner, a sympathy in his low voice, which reached the woman's heart, and she was comforted a little; she would remember his words in a few days, and find strength in them.

But he had a difficult task to perform as he moved about from one to the other where “there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning; Rachel weep-

ing for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not."

Suddenly there was a loud shout of joy, Three boats were seen in the distance beating towards the haven.

The shout of joy recalled Walter to his own anxiety; but he resolutely put it away from him; or rather he endured the pain, and went on steadily with his work.

"That's my man!" shrieked Muckle Jean Houston, almost rushing into the water; "I ken him by the newly-barked sail. He's safe, he's safe! the Lord be praised!"

She had been married only a few weeks, and she was frantic with joy at his escape.

"And that's my Donald, yonder!" cried old Meg Carnoustie, whose thin white hair floated in the wind; "that's my bairn; I ken by the white patch in the sail; I put it in wi' my ain hands. My bairn is safe! oh, God be thanked!"

The young wife and the aged mother were in their happiness selfishly indifferent to the agonies of those around them. They rushed

to the farthest point of land, followed by others, to be ready to give any assistance that might be in their power.

“And yon is Gleyed Tam wi’ the smack rig,” said Peg Johnstone quietly, but with sufficient interest to warrant the suspicion that she felt a deal more pleasure than she chose to display.

The boats tacked to windward of the Wrecker; the eyes of those who watched starting in the sockets, hands reached out, straining towards the men in eagerness to help. The water rushed up to the knees of the women and men who stood in front. The interest of all was concentrated for the moment upon the three boats, and personal affliction and fears were forgotten.

A sudden silence fell upon the crowd. Muckle Jean Houston’s man, Donald Carnoustie, Gleyed Tam, and their crews seemed to represent all that the folk of Rowanden had at stake, although twenty boats had gone out.

They passed the Wrecker—a long breath

of relief, that was almost a groan, escaped from the crowd. They crossed the bar and ran in shore safely. The boats were seized by eager hands and dragged up the beach before one of the crews could spring out. Then all the men were surrounded by friends ; voices rose loud, joyful, and sad. The interest became again personal, and women and men shrieked out inquiries for the loved ones who had not returned. The boats had been separated by the storm ; each had made for the port which the skipper thought he had most chance of reaching ; others had gone down in sight of their comrades, who were powerless to help them. All the nets and tackle of every description had been lost ; but a portion of them might be recovered by the Government lugger which had put out for the fishing-ground to render what assistance might be in its power. A few boats would be picked up, and possibly one or two crews who had managed to beat about and keep their crafts afloat ; others would be heard of from different stations ;

but the losses would be heavy in any case.

Gleyed Tam, the water dripping from him and forming a pool round his feet whenever he halted, made his way to Mysie Keith.

“For God’s sake, Mysie,” he said hoarsely—and the ugliness of his face did not mar its expression of deep sorrow, and of humble gratitude for his own escape—“speak to Buckie Willie’s wife. She’s standing yonder wi’ the bairns, saying never a word when a’ the folk are clattering. Try and cheer her—she kens that he was next to me when we gaed out.”

“And is he no to come hame?”

“No; his boat capsized no three yards from me. I could not do anything. I saw him in the water holding up his laddie, Jock, in his arms, and fechtin’ wi’ the waves to save the loon. He held him up when he was going down himself. He was making for our boat, and I watched to get hold o’ him. He was gey near us too; but the laddie couldna soom like his father; and I

just heard Buckie crying, 'It's God's will, and there was a big wave, and I never saw them again. Try and cheer her, puir sowl; tell her that she'll no want as lang as I ha'e a bite to share wi' her and the bairns.'

Mysie bowed her head and went over to the woman, to discharge the task for which her own suffering qualified her. She took the youngest bairn in her arms; bade the other children follow; then she seized the dumb woman by the arm and led her up to the trim cottage. The kettle was hanging over the fire—placed a link lower on the chain before she had gone out, so that it might be ready on her return from that sad quest which had no end and no comfort for herself, save that she could comfort others. She made tea for the widow; and presently, without a word spoken, the woman comprehended that she had lost her husband and her eldest born.

On the beach at Rowanden there were women who had been, during the night, deprived of husband and children; children

who were now fatherless ; and old men whose mainstays in life had been taken from them.

And Walter worked earnestly amongst them ; speaking to each those homely words of comfort and hope which seem so commonplace and dull to us when we are well and happy, but are full of sympathetic meaning and consolation when we are in sorrow. All his own troubles were forgotten, and when remembered they seemed to be insignificant in view of the despair which he encountered here amongst his parishioners. So he worked, devotedly and lovingly, and many hearts were lightened, many vicious thoughts corrected by his words and acts of simple kindness. Some who would have been ready to “curse God and die,” were softened and helped to bear their burden.

Ailie came down from the Norlan' Head to see what was going on, and to do what she could for the sufferers. Walter saw her, and the storm in his home came back to him. He could not restrain himself—he

ran towards her with the breathless question—

“Did Teenie send you for me?”

“Teenie—I have not seen her since yesterday forenoon!”

“Not seen her?—was she not with you last night?”

“Wi’ me?—no; what gars you spier such a ridiculous question? She was at hame.”

He stood dumbstricken, his hands clenched, bewildered and stupefied.

END OF VOL. II.

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